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A SHORT STUDY OF ETHICS

A SHORT
STUDY OF ETHICS

BY

CHARLES F. D'ARCY, B.D.

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PREFACE

THIS little book regards ethics from the philosophical standpoint. It endeavours to give, *in small space*, an account as well of the metaphysical basis as of the ethical superstructure: an attempt which, so far as the writer knows, has not been made in any other recent book. Three excellent works—excellent for their brevity as for their scientific value—have appeared of late years, which present what is substantially the same general view as that taken in these pages: Professor Dewey's *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*, Mr. Muirhead's *Elements of Ethics*, and Mr. Mackenzie's *Manual of Ethics*. But all three build without a foundation. To the reader who is familiar with Professor T. H. Green's ethical method, the lucidity of these books is admirable. But the writer cannot help wondering

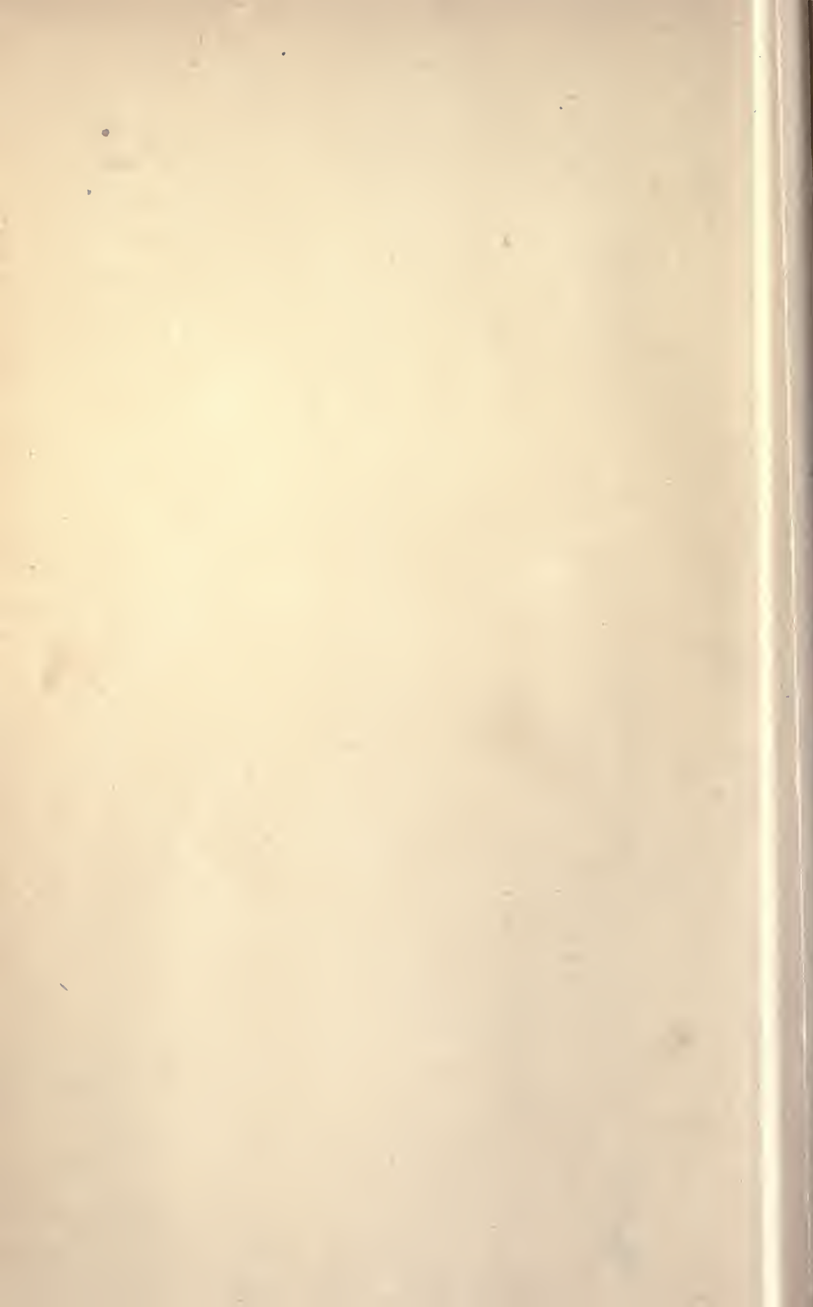
whether his enjoyment in reading them would have been as great as it was if he had not previously made the acquaintance of the great *Prolegomena.*

It may seem almost useless to essay to crush the perplexing questions which lie at the threshold of ethical study into the few pages which go to make up Part I. of this little book. But the attempt is surely worth making, if there is even a chance of engaging the attention of readers who may be repelled by the formidable bulk and difficulty of the great works which give to these questions a more elaborate consideration.

Among all modern English contributions to this great literature the *Prolegomena to Ethics* stands easily first. And, though not able to accept in its entirety the Hegelian conception of the spiritual principle as presented in that book, the writer finds it impossible to express adequately the greatness of the debt which he owes to its teaching. He must also acknowledge his indebtedness to the writings of the present Master of Balliol, to Mr. F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies,* and to the three smaller works mentioned above; all of which have done

much to stimulate that movement of ethical thought which seems to be rapidly taking place among the cultivated.

Special acknowledgments are due to Professor Bernard and Mr. N. Colgan for their kindness in reading the proof-sheets and making many valuable suggestions.



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INTRODUCTION

§ 1. Definition of Ethics.

ETHICS is the Science of Conduct. This definition is the commonest and most familiar. It is also the best. Ordinary language provides a plain yet accurate definition, because Ethics is concerned with the commonest experiences of life. It is, however, necessary to inquire into the meaning of the word *conduct*, and the precise force of the term *science*, when used in this connexion. Familiar expressions are almost always more or less ambiguous.

§ 2. Conduct.

It is evident that Conduct cannot include purposeless action.[1] Conduct has therefore been defined: "Acts adjusted to ends."[1] But this definition is insufficient, for even among inorganic processes there are acts adjusted to ends. It would be absurd to speak of the conduct of a watch-spring in uncoiling, though the action is adjusted to an end. Again, in the organic world, the closing of the leaf of the sun-dew round an insect, the blinking of the eyelids, the action of sneezing in men or animals, are instances of acts adjusted to ends, but it would be an abuse of language to call any of these acts *conduct*. The name *conduct* can, then, be applied only to a kind of acts adjusted to ends, and the question is, What kind? Some of the acts mentioned above as excluded from conduct

[1] See Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, chap. i. § 2.

are consciously performed. The mere consciousness, then, that an act is performed is not enough to include it in conduct. And the reason is sufficiently obvious: such acts, though consciously performed, are involuntary. To constitute conduct in the strict and accurate sense of the term there must be, not merely consciousness, but also the exercise of *will*. Conduct may therefore be defined "voluntary action."[1] Ethics is the science of voluntary action.

§ 3. The terms "Ethical" and "Moral."

It is well to note that for scientific use the term *Moral* is to be regarded as identical with the term *Ethical*, meaning simply *relating to conduct or voluntary action*. Ethics is frequently termed Morals or Moral Philosophy. The word *moral* is also used in more than one special sense. But, with one exception, all special meanings must be carefully excluded from the scientific use of the term. The one exception which it is practically impossible to exclude is that in which the *moral*[2] is contrasted with the *immoral*, and so made to cover a part only of the whole field of conduct.

§ 4. Ethics as Science.

The definition of Ethics as the science of voluntary action is likely to suggest a doubt. The question may be asked: If action is voluntary, due, that is, to the operation of will, is it not incalculable, and does it not on that account lie outside the province of science? The doubt is important, for it reveals a fundamental distinction. In the ordinary acceptation of the word, science means the classification and explanation of facts. And facts are not treated by science as if they were random, disconnected things. Science presupposes everywhere the necessary connexion of cause and effect, and, working upon this

[1] See Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, § 14.
[2] See Dewey, *Outlines of Ethics*, § 2.

basis, science seeks to discover the particular causal relation which underlies each fact. Thus it comes to pass that the usual method by which science justifies itself and proves its success is by providing a means of prediction. When astronomy was able to predict the occurrence of eclipses, and the recurrence of comets, its claim to be a real and successful science could be doubted no longer. But how can there be a science of that which, in the strict scientific sense, can never be predicted, because it must always remain incalculable?[1]

It is possible to make two different answers to this question. (1) It is possible to deny, in company with many distinguished thinkers, the essentially incalculable element in Will, and affirm that all human acts, those called voluntary as well as those called involuntary, are the necessary effects of natural causes. According to this view man is, in every respect, but a part of nature; and Ethics, supposing such a science to exist, is but a higher branch of natural history.

On the other hand, (2) it is possible to take refuge in a different conception of science. While it is true that most sciences are of the kind described above, there are other sciences which deal, not with facts as facts, but with rules for the guidance of practice. Every such science legislates for some corresponding art. Thus Logic gives laws to the art of reasoning. So also it is conceivable that there should be a distinct science working out the rules of procedure in each distinct art. Sciences of this sort are called *Regulative* or *Normative*, because they lay down the rules according to which judgment is given upon practice.

[1] See F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies* (Essay i.) for a valuable discussion of the prediction of conduct.

Thus Logic lays down the rules by which we judge of the correctness or incorrectness of any process of reasoning. So also Ethics can be regarded as the science which supplies the rules by which we approve or disapprove of conduct.

There can be no doubt that the latter is the correct view of the nature of Ethics. Ethics is the Science of the Art of Life. It is concerned with the principles which underlie the estimation of conduct.

§ 5. The Ethical Distinction.

The approval or disapproval of conduct is commonly expressed by the words *Good* or *Bad*, *Right* or *Wrong*, *Ought to be done*, or *Ought not to be done*. With perfect confidence we say of one act, "It is right," of another, "It is wrong." Every man arrogates to himself the capacity of giving within certain limits an absolute judgment upon the conduct of his fellows, of pronouncing approval of some actions, disapproval of others. In giving such judgments we speak with the utmost confidence and without hesitation, yet we make very great assumptions. For the questions may be asked: What is meant by saying one action is *right* another *wrong*, one is *good* another *bad*, one *ought to be done* another *ought not to be done?* On what ground can authority to make these absolute judgments of approval or disapproval be assumed? What is the standard of ethical judgment? Supposing that the distinction is real and the judgment authoritative, there must be some standard by reference to which each particular case as it arises may be decided.

These questions lead us from our habitual and unscientific practice of the Art of Life, and set us face to face with the science of Ethics. If they can be answered satisfactorily the position of Ethical Science is secured.

Briefly these questions are:—

What is the meaning of the Ethical distinction?
How is it justified?
What is the standard of Ethical judgment?

§ 6. Appeal to Philosophy.

It will become sufficiently evident as we proceed that these questions cannot receive a fitting discussion apart from philosophy.[1] But already it has become apparent that the subject-matter of our science is of such a kind that at the very beginning of our inquiry we are forced to enter into philosophical considerations. We have seen that there are some authorities who deny the essentially incalculable element in Will. They hold that every act of Will is a case of natural causation, and that an intelligence which had sufficiently grasped the laws of psychology as well as those of physics, and which knew the exact circumstances of all individuals, could foretell the whole history of mankind and every act of choice made by every individual in time to come. It is obvious that such a view reduces Ethics to a branch of natural science, and, if consistent, must treat the Ethical judgment of approval or disapproval as illusive. If everything must be, it is absurd, or at least needless, to speak of what ought to be. If man's consciousness is like some strange phosphorescence fitfully playing over the surface of an iron necessity of material causation—a mere by-product of physical forces—and if man's will has no power of free determination, it is useless to appeal to him as to one who can choose the right and act accordingly.

[1] The word *philosophy* is used here and elsewhere in this book as equivalent to *metaphysics*, and meaning the endeavour to attain unity of thought, the attempt to reach those basal principles which we assume to exist, and which, when grasped, will enable the mind to think consistently. In Mr. Bradley's words, metaphysics is "the effort to comprehend the universe as a whole."

If the will is only a link in the chain of physical causation, there is no such thing as responsibility, and the ethical judgment is unmeaning.

But none of those who adopt this view of the will cling to it consistently. Every attempt to treat the problem of Ethics as a problem in natural history is made the introduction to some enforcement of the practical rules of moral conduct as generally understood. The most determined efforts[1] to regard human conduct as the top round in the ladder of organic evolution end in a sudden *volte face* by which the student finds himself suddenly appealed to as a free intelligence. Consciousness and Will erect an eternal barrier against the attempt to explain the spiritual activities of man by the processes of nature.

It is therefore impossible to attack the main problem of Ethics without a preliminary inquiry into those spiritual activities which occupy so fundamental a position. Before we can understand how man is subject to obligation, and before we can define the nature and extent of that obligation, we must know something of what man is; that is, we must have some knowledge, even though it be a very imperfect knowledge, of the relations in which man stands to the universe at large. Ethics must rest upon a basis of philosophy.

But, it may be thought, every art might have its corresponding normative science, and no one would deem it necessary, in the working out of each such science, to begin with philosophy. No writer engaged in formulating the science of the art of navigation would dream of beginning with philosophy. Why should Ethics be different? The answer is not difficult. Ethics is different from the normative science of any of the special arts in that its subject-matter

[1] As with Mr. Herbert Spencer.

is co-extensive with experience. It deals with life as a whole. It is the science of the art of life. Now the opinion which we entertain as to man's life as a whole and its relation to the universe at large must influence our practice of the art of life (*i.e.* our conduct), and consequently the view which we take of the science of conduct. If there are any who consistently hold the opinion professed by many that man is an element in the system of material things and nothing more, then to such life cannot be what it is to the man who believes himself a free intelligence. The ethical theory which suits the former cannot possibly satisfy the latter.

It is true that there are many who are repelled by philosophy. With them the name Metaphysics—the usual term for philosophy in English literature—stands for a medley of confused and contradictory opinions, and suggests no idea so much as hopelessness of arriving at any conclusion. But this phase of thought is rapidly passing away. The study of philosophy is exciting a new interest. We are beginning to find out the truth of the old dictum which teaches that man must philosophise. Whether philosophy be successful or not, it is inevitable. It is impossible even to endeavour to think consistently without engaging in philosophic study. And, if this is true of thought as a whole, it is also true of the science of the art of life as a whole. It is impossible to enter into any adequate discussion of the problem of Ethics except through the gate of philosophy.

If the truth of this conclusion has not been made plain, it is to be hoped it will become more apparent in the course of the following pages.[1]

[1] The reader who wishes to avoid metaphysics may pass at once to chap. vi. of part i. and then to part ii. He is, however, recommended to read §§ 7, 8 of chap. iii. of part

PART I

THE PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS OF ETHICS

CHAPTER I

SPIRIT AS KNOWING SUBJECT

§ 1. Method of the Inquiry.

SYSTEMATIC knowledge of every kind must deal with experience. But that attempt at systematic knowledge which is called philosophy deals with experience in a manner altogether different from the manner of science. Science takes experience as it stands, isolates a portion of it, and subjects that portion to analysis. Philosophy, on the other hand, takes experience as a whole and seeks the conditions of its possibility. The proof of this principle and of the method which it involves is to be found in the whole history of philosophy up to Kant. Philosophy was driven back upon this lowly-seeming position when the more daring pretensions of earlier thinkers proved unfounded and their efforts proved fruitless.

§ 2. Subject and Object.

The primary condition of all experience is the relation of *subject* and *object*, self and not-self. In all cognition there must be the subject or self which knows, and the object or not-self which is known. This is the fundamental condition apart from which experience of any kind becomes an impossibility. Strike out either the experiencing subject or the thing that is experienced and nought remains behind: experience vanishes.

§ 3. The Object.

There is no use in trying to make any further progress by directing attention to the Subject or Self. So approached it eludes the grasp of thought. The not-self must be examined. Taking experience, then, as a whole we note at once a great division in the not-self, an inner and an outer region.

The inner region includes sensations, emotions, thoughts, etc.

The outer region contains all the things we know in the world around us.

Now, in the case of the inner region, it is obvious that it, with all that it contains, is dependent for its very existence upon the subject to which it is correlative. A feeling—sensation or emotion—exists only because there is a subject that feels it. A thought exists only because there is a thinker. The subject is, then, the condition of the possibility of all experiences belonging to the inner region. The thinker is logically prior to all his thoughts. He is the presupposition of their existence.[1] His being is the primary condition of their possibility.

It is thus comparatively easy to see that the inner experiences presuppose the thinking subject. They are essentially dependent upon him. They exist for him. But the outer experiences, the things that come under our observation in the world around, seem altogether different. It appears a mere commonplace to say they are independent of the observer. Yet are they independent? Examine any

[1] From this it follows that it is illogical to identify the thinker with the sum total of his inner experiences. This was done by J. S. Mill when (*Examination of Sir W. Hamilton*, chap. xii.) he described the Mind as a series of feelings. It is strange that, though acutely conscious of the difficulty of his position, he failed to see that he was making a logical blunder of the simplest kind.

concrete thing—this table, that chair, that mountain—and it will be found to be constituted by *relations*.[1] This table is what it is, because of the relations in which its parts stand to one another. These parts are themselves constituted by the relations of their parts. And so on. Not only so, but the thing is what it is, not merely because of its internal relations, *i.e.* the relations between its parts, but because of the relations in which it stands to the whole surrounding universe of things. Every element of any concrete thing may be shown to be determined by relation. The size of a thing means the space relations of its parts. The position of a thing, the space relations in which it stands to certain conventional limits. The weight of a thing is relative to an assumed standard. And so on.

§ 4. Matter and Motion.

It is exceedingly difficult for the mind which is unaccustomed to this mode of thinking to grasp the case of a concrete thing, and that for a very good reason which will soon become apparent. Let us, then, for the sake of simplification, take a more abstract illustration. The material universe, it has been asserted, can be explained in terms of matter and motion.[2] But what are matter and motion? This is no modern question. Some of the

[1] In discussing this question it is necessary, for the sake of clearness, to avoid psychological complications. The process by which the mind becomes aware of the external world is called *Perception*. To enter into an analysis of that process here would create confusion and afford no help. So, also, it is well to keep clear of the physical and neural processes which accompany Perception.

[2] It must be noted that this reduction of the material universe to matter and motion is illegitimate, because it is an effort to explain the concrete in terms of the abstract. That is, it explains by the simple process of leaving out everything which is not matter and motion. Pythagoras went a step further, and explained the universe in terms of numbers by leaving out everything but numbers.

oldest and most threadbare of philosophical conundrums are those which deal with the nature of matter and motion. Such is the question about the divisibility of matter. Matter must, it is said, be infinitely divisible. It can have no ultimate parts. "For each of such ultimate parts, did they exist, must have an under and an upper surface, a right and a left side, like any larger fragment. Now it is impossible to imagine its sides so near, that no plane of section can be conceived between them; and however great be the assumed force of cohesion, it is impossible to shut out the idea of a greater force capable of overcoming it."[1] This difficulty seems insuperable, but it vanishes in a moment if matter be regarded as *constituted by relation*. It is the effort to reach something absolute, some final self-sufficing unit—the effort, that is, to eliminate relation—which leads the mind into the snare.

The case of motion is even clearer than that of matter, as the following striking illustration given by Mr. Spencer will demonstrate :—

"Here, for instance, is a ship which, for simplicity's sake, we will suppose to be anchored at the Equator with her head to the West. When the captain walks from stem to stern, in what direction does he move? East is the obvious answer—an answer which for the moment may pass without criticism. But now the anchor is heaved and the vessel sails to the West with a velocity equal to that at which the captain walks. In what direction does he now move when he goes from stem to stern? You cannot say East, for the vessel is carrying him as fast towards the West as he walks to the East; and you cannot say West for the converse reason. In respect to surrounding space he is

[1] Spencer, *First Principles*, part i. chap. iii. § 16.

stationary; though to all on board the ship he seems to be moving. But now are we quite sure of this conclusion? Is he really stationary? When we take into account the Earth's motion round its axis, we find that, instead of being stationary, he is travelling at the rate of 1000 miles per hour to the East, so that neither the perception of one who looks at him, nor the inference of one who allows for the ship's motion, is anything like the truth. Nor, indeed, on further examination, shall we find this revised conclusion to be much better. For we have forgotten to allow for the Earth's motion in its orbit."[1]

From this illustration Mr. Spencer draws the conclusion that "our ideas of motion" are "illusive." But surely they are illusive to those only who persist in imagining that motion is anything but a series of relations. Mr. Spencer does not seem to have fully realised the truth of his own doctrine that knowledge is concerned with relations.[2]

Thus in whatever way our analysis attacks the world of concrete things, whether by examining any particular object, or by probing into the nature of the more important elements, it attains the same conclusion. The world of things in space and time, the things which, above all others, are commonly called *real* things, is as a mere matter of fact a vast complex of relations.

§ 5. Function of the Subject.

When this conclusion is reached an irresistible logic

[1] Spencer, *First Principles*, part i. chap. iii. § 17.

[2] Mr. Spencer's account of the "Relativity of Knowledge" seems to blend together two very different doctrines—

(1) That the relation between subject and object is the primary condition of Experience.

(2) That the object of knowledge consists of relations.

Mr. Spencer also seems to fall into the curious confusion of calling the knowledge of relations relative knowledge.

On this whole subject see Maguire, *Lectures on Philosophy*, Lect i.

leads us rapidly forward. It belongs to the very nature of a relation that it has no existence, no meaning, except for a thinker. It demands, as the basal condition of its possibility, a thinking subject for whom it exists. For a relation is a comparison between things, a putting of things together, a unifying of the manifold. It is therefore an impossibility apart from a subject which can pass from one member of the relation to the other and combine both in a single apprehension. The concrete world, then, which forms the outer region of experience, is not to be regarded as a collection of fixed self-sufficing things having each an independent existence of its own. This world is rather, at any moment, a "stage in a process" of "relationing," and is dependent for its very existence upon the thinking subject which is the agent in the process. Thus the distinction between the inner and the outer region, as regards dependence, vanishes, and all the things included in experience are found to have possibility only in so far as they are correlative to the subject of the experience.

§ 6. Relations and Things.

One obvious objection will immediately occur to every reader. It will be said that it is absurd to speak of relations existing without things to be related,[1] and, it will be added, the existence of such things is assumed in the argument above, where relation is spoken of as a comparison between things, a putting of things together. This objection is important, because it is a step to a clearer understanding of the whole position.

First, let it be noted that a thing out of relation is not a thing at all. Everything is determined to be what it is by

[1] This objection is urged by the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour in *Mind*, No. xxxiii. Article iv., and in *Foundations of Belief*, part ii. chap. ii. § 2.

relation with other things, and to suppose a thing out of all relation is to suppose a nonentity. The supposition is a possible one, because of a confusion between the figments which are made by the mind in the effort to understand and things as they actually exist. In the effort to understand, the mind is driven to abstraction. It cuts off a small portion of experience and considers it separately. By a convenient fiction it severs the links which connect a part of the net-work of experience with the whole, in order that it may the more easily examine the inner relations which subsist within that part. The thing which is thus formed is not, however, an independent self-sufficing unit, nor is it regarded as such by the mind except in a momentary fashion, or while the mind is occupied with the inner relations to the intentional exclusion of the outer relations. But the general impression which results from the constant application of this method is to the effect that the world of experience contains a multitude of separate independent things which may enter into relation with one another, but which exist apart from all relation. The impression is, however, an illusion.

Take an illustration[1] of the simplest kind. Geometry, the most accurate of sciences, is conversant with the relations between points. But attempt to fix the mind on a single mathematical point, and thought ceases to be a possibility. No single point has any existence except by reference to other points. Think of a single point and you must think of the space which surrounds it, that is,

[1] This illustration may seem too abstract. But it is not so, because, in the effort to grasp a thing out of relation, every relational element in the constitution of any concrete object must be put aside, and the result will be that the last element left will be the mathematical points which determine the figure of the object in space.

you must think of an indefinite number of possible points determining its position. The reality of the case consists in the relations. With these relations there are things, without them there is nothing. In fact, the relations make the things, not the things the relations. Things occur only as elements in relations. The primary fact is *relation* not thing. Or, more correctly, the *thing* is but a stage in a process of "relationing."

If any one finds this statement unsatisfactory, then let him consider this, that so far as our argument here is concerned it does not matter in the least whether the world of things in space and time, which forms the outer region of experience, is described as a complex of *relations* or as a complex of *things in relation*. The point is that the things are such that they have no existence except as related. Without relations there are no things. Things exist only in so far as they are related. Or, in other words, things exist only in so far as they are due to the synthetic activity of the knowing subject.

§ 7. Object and Cosmos.

Further, no one thing can be known by itself. Everything in the world is related in an indefinite number of ways to everything else. It is only necessary to fasten attention upon any concrete instance to see the truth of this. This table is connected by space relations with the fixed stars, by time relations with the building of the Pyramids. Every element in experience is related to everything which has been, is, or can be an element in experience. The universe is a connected system of relations.[1] From this it follows that to know any one thing perfectly would be to know the whole universe of possible experiences. In fact, any object A is only grasped as an object by contrast

[1] See T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, chap. i.

with *not-A* (*i.e.* all the universe but *A*). So far as *A* is known, *not-A* is known, and conversely.

Two important conclusions result from these considerations:—

First, since the universe is a connected system of relations, and since every separate relation is due to the synthetic activity of the knowing subject, it follows that *the subject is the unifying principle in the whole cosmos of experience.*

Secondly, the primary relation in experience is not simply the relation of subject and object. It is rather the relation of subject and cosmos. *The true object is always cosmic in form.*

§ 8. Summary of Results.

The knowing subject is then the primary condition essential to the very existence of—

(1) Every element in the inner region of experience.

(2) Every element in the outer region of experience. The subject is constitutive of every concrete thing in space and time.

(3) The universe as a whole, so far as there can be any universe for human experience.

§ 9. What is the knowing Subject?

What, then, is the knowing subject?

It is *a unifying principle.* It is the principle which gives unity to every element in experience, and to the world of experience as a whole. Its method is relation, the combining of the manifold.

It is, for human thought, *the ultimate principle of unity.* It is impossible to get behind the subject and subordinate it to any higher unit. It is itself the ultimate unit which is possible for thought, for it gives unity to every object of thought. It is impossible for anything to be an object of thought except through subjection to this principle. Self is the necessary background of thought.

The subject is *self-conscious.* It possesses the unique peculiarity of being able to objectify itself. It can contemplate itself as an object. It can, as it were, rise above its own opposition to the object and view itself in relation.[1] It thus contains implicitly within itself the principle of relation, the synthesis of the many in the one. But while it is thus able to view itself as object, and so, in a manner, rise above itself, it cannot, as subject, escape the charmed circle of its own being. It cannot leave self behind and rise into a higher sphere, for the higher sphere into which it rises when it objectifies itself is still itself.[2] Self is always the background of thought.

[1] This self-consciousness of the subject does not mean merely that the subject has feelings, thoughts, etc., the phenomena of the inner region. That mistake is often made. Self-consciousness consists not merely in having feelings or thoughts, but in that consciousness which becomes explicit in the recognition of a feeling as "my" feeling, a thought as "my" thought, a book as the book which "I" see or touch or read. Self-consciousness is the strange power which the mind possesses of objectifying itself. It is implicit in all experience; for, otherwise, experience is impossible. The unifying agency of the self, by which it passes from self to not-self and from every element in the not-self to every other element and combines all in one, is essentially the agency of self-consciousness. The subject is a unifying principle only in so far as it is self-conscious, *i.e.* in so far as it is able to rise above itself and its own opposition to the object. The objectified self is therefore no "group of mental states which form a permanent nucleus in the mental history" (Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*, p. 75). No group of mental states could ever form a self in any but an improper (or derivative) sense of the term, for every group needs the self to constitute it, and in the very act of constituting it the self must be already implicitly self-conscious or the act could never take place. Self-consciousness is presupposed in the very formation of this so-called "empirical self." This empirical self is no more properly called "the self" than the body is properly called "the person."

[2] The Master of Balliol, in his *Evolution of Religion* (p. 67), seems to deny this. He seems to hold that the opposition of subject and object

In order to understand more perfectly what the self-conscious subject is, it is well to consider what it is not.

It is not a substance or a cause in the sense in which material things are said to be substances or causes, for the simple reason that the unity of the self-conscious subject is presupposed in the very idea of substantiality or causation.[1]

The subject is not in space or time, because it is conscious of space and time. Space and time presuppose it. They are possible only because its unity is logically prior to them.[2]

The subject is not a mere logical subject, as Kant seems to have thought. It is not a mere abstract principle of unity, a mere formula, as it is often regarded.[3] The subject is not an abstraction of any kind for the reason that it is the agent in every process of abstraction. The abstract exists only where the subject has been at work. The self cannot be identified with its creature. The subject is *unit* rather than *unity*. It is concrete, not abstract.

The subject is not the *mere correlative* of experience. A mistake is sometimes made here. It is thought that

implies the existence of a higher principle which, "as a crystal sphere," "holds them together." But surely (with all deference to so high an authority) the subject is, by virtue of its self-consciousness, the crystal sphere that holds subject and object together. Is not this the very essence of self-consciousness?

[1] See note at end of this chapter.

[2] It is necessary to guard against misunderstanding. It is not meant that the subject can have experience independently of space or time. The experience of the subject is in space and time.

[3] This consideration is important, because the incautious expressions of some writers have seemed to lay the doctrine which is expounded in this chapter open to the imputation of making spirit into a mere abstract principle of unity. On this Mr. Balfour bases certain acute criticisms. See *Mind*, No. xxxiii. Art. iv., and *Foundations of Belief*, pp. 145, 146. See alsc chap. ii. § 3, note 6.

just as the cosmos implies the subject, so, and equally, the subject implies the cosmos;[1] that the subject presupposes the cosmos as much as the cosmos presupposes the subject. But this is not so. For the subject gives being to every relation in the cosmos as well as to the whole. Take the cosmos piecemeal and the subject is seen to be constitutive of every part. The subject is the ultimate unit by reference to which every element has existence. Secondly, the very self-consciousness of the subject is an implicit assertion of its logical priority. For self-consciousness means that the subject is correlative to the object (or cosmos), and more than correlative. In self-consciousness the subject objectifies itself, overleaps, that is, the opposition of subject and object, and stands as its own correlative. As already pointed out, it has thus the principle of relation (the many in the one) implicit in itself, and so is logically prior to that (*i.e.* the cosmos) which depends for its very existence upon the principle of relation as given to it by the subject. Thirdly, the subject is not the mere correlative of the cosmos, for the simple reason that the subject can abstract from the concrete and remain still the same self-identical subject as before.

§ 10. Definition of the Subject.

It is impossible to define the subject, for it is too big for definition. It is prior to all thought and to all language, the expression of thought, and cannot therefore be adequately represented by any set of words. Still we can with confidence make certain assertions respecting it. It is self-conscious. It is a unifying principle, and yet concrete. It

[1] This seems to be the fundamental thought of Pantheism. The doctrine that the spiritual world and the material world are two different sides of the same reality, and imply one another *equally*, leads directly to the identification of God with the world.

is active,[1] for it is the Agent in the process of "relationing." It has capacity, for it contains implicitly the principle (that of relation) which grasps the universe.

The self-conscious subject is called Spirit, Person, Soul, Mind, Self, Ego, Intelligence.[2] It is the "I" of individual experience.

NOTE TO CHAPTER I

ON SOME OBJECTIONS

For the sake of clearness, as well as for the sake of brevity, it has been found necessary to avoid the discussion of many questions which are likely to suggest themselves to the mind of the careful reader. Some of these questions are, however, too pressing to be altogether passed over.

What, it may be asked, makes the distinction between the inner and the outer regions of experience? If both equally presuppose the self-conscious subject, what makes that distinction between them which is so strongly marked that the outer region seems independent when compared with the obviously dependent nature of the inner? The answer is, that the distinction arises from the fact that the outer region is in space as well as in time; the inner region is in time only. In fact, the word *Outer* is merely another way of saying *in space*. The impression of independence seems to arise from the fact that the things in the outer region are *substances*, that is, they are *permanent*, they persist through time, in strong contrast with the fugitive character of the inner phenomena, which, being in time only, form a mere succession of mutually exclusive occurrences.

This first question, then, leads inevitably to another. What

[1] It is sometimes objected that to speak of the Self as *Active* is to make it a cause. But the activity of the Self is not the activity of the material cause. It is the activity of Self-determination. This will emerge more clearly when we come to consider the Will.

[2] Some of these terms are also used in special senses.

are *space* and *time*, and what is *substance?* It would be impossible to enter upon an adequate discussion of this great problem here. Nor is it necessary. Kant's investigation remains the most satisfactory. His proof that Space, Time, Substance, Cause, etc., are modes of the activity of the mind, and do not exist apart from the knowing of things, has survived every assault.

But any one who has endeavoured to follow the brief outline of the foregoing chapter is surely able to see that the knowing subject is logically prior to space and time, for they are, after all, names for the possibility of certain classes of relations, names, that is, for certain modes of intelligent apprehension. What, to take the case of time, holds all the parts of succession together and makes *one time*, except the synthetic activity of the Self? So also with space. Similarly substance (or the permanent in time) exists only by relation with the flux of successive phenomena, and cause exists only by relation with effect; substantiality and causation are therefore names for certain kinds of relation, and are possible because intelligence makes relation possible.

One other question calls perhaps for some attention. It may be thought that sensation is an element in experience which seems to be independent of the activity of the subject, and sensation is a very large constituent in the world of concrete things.[1] But, let it be noted, sensation exists as an element in experience, only where it is determined by relation. But determination by relation is only another way of saying determination by the activity of the self-conscious subject. It follows that sensation is dependent upon the mind for its very existence, not merely in the sense of being impossible unless there is a mind to feel it, but in the sense of being determined by the activity of the mind as a self-conscious agent.

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[1] See Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, chap. i.

CHAPTER II

SPIRIT AND NATURE

§ 1. Experience and Nature.

THE conclusion of chapter i. may seem more amazing than satisfactory to many readers. "Am I to believe," it may be asked, "that the world has no existence but what it derives from its relation to the human spirit? Is the universe a private possession of my own? Are the sun and stars in their courses, the solid earth and all that it contains, mere creatures of my intelligence? Does the light of heaven go out in darkness when I shut my eyes? Does cosmos become chaos the moment I become unconscious in sleep? Shall the vast mechanism of the material universe become a nonentity when I die?"

The question is useful, for it exhibits clearly how utterly dependent upon the spiritual principle is every element which can enter into experience. But it is a mistake to suppose that it is here intended to identify the cosmos of the individual experience with Nature. Nature must be accepted as a great fact, a mighty universe, containing myriads of things which do not enter into man's experience at all, while the cosmos of experience must be recognised as identical with a part of the great cosmos of Nature.[1]

[1] Nature is here made to include all phenomena, inner as well as outer. And surely this is right; psychology, if it exist at all, must be one of the natural sciences.

§ 2. The Personality of God.

We cannot attempt to answer the question as to the reason why Nature must be accepted in this manner as a fact. For us, on the present occasion, it is quite sufficient that every one does so accept it, and that to deny the validity of the assumption is to plunge into universal scepticism, and to adopt all the impossible absurdities of individualist idealism.[1]

But what is the meaning of the assumption? Nature, while it must be accepted as a fact, is not a fact which can stand alone. With a part of Nature, the cosmos of experience, we are intimately acquainted, and our acquaintance with that part proves that natural things exist only as they are constituted by spirit. Natural things depend upon spirit for their very possibility. Nature as a whole, then, exists only on condition that there is Spirit to constitute it. In other words, if Nature is a fact, God is. Our belief in a vast, natural universe integrating all possible experiences is found to imply belief in a Universal Spirit, that is, in God. God is Spirit, because Nature exists.

We are forced, then, to believe in a *Personal* God. But it is well to be very careful as to the range of that expression. It need not mean that God is *a Person*. He may be far more than Personal. We shall indeed see reason to believe that the idea of *Personality* does not exhaust the nature of Deity. When therefore God is spoken of as a Personal Being or Spirit, the meaning is that He is *at least* Personal.

§ 3. Examination of Objections.

An able critic objects to the argument of § 2 on the ground that it "passes from the affirmation of *analogous action* to the affirmation of *identical quality*."[2] The same objection

[1] Sometimes called "solipsism."

[2] Prof. H. Sidgwick in *Mind*, No. xxxiv. Art. i. Prof. Sidg-

may possibly prove a stumbling-block to others. Does it follow, because nature implies "an all-uniting agency" of some kind, that this agency must be self-conscious? But the *action* is the *quality*. We have seen that, in being self-conscious, the subject contains implicitly the principle of relation, or, perhaps more accurately, is the principle of relation[1] which combines the many in the one, and so constitutes experience. The act of combining the many in the one is essentially an act of self-consciousness.[2] If, then, nature demands (as it most certainly does) an all-uniting agency capable of combining in one whole the many things in space and time, that agency can be none other than self-consciousness. And, if this fails to convince, it is possible to fall back upon the argument, that if self-consciousness provides an adequate principle, there is no reason why we should hesitate to adopt it as the solution of the problem. The Law of Parcimony is an accepted rule of philosophical discussion.

wick is criticising T. H. Green's argument, which, though not expressed in the same terms as the above, involves the same passage from experience to nature.

[1] It is not meant that the subject is nothing more than this. That would be a separation of the form from the matter of experience after the manner of Kant. To regard the subject as "an all-uniting agency" dealing with a given material is to make an illegitimate abstraction. How exactly true it is that the *action* (not merely the action of combining the manifold, but that of constituting a cosmos) is the *quality* which is essentially characteristic of the self-conscious subject (or Person) will be more clearly seen when the conclusions of chap. i. § 8, are viewed in the light of those of chap. iii.

[2] It would be better to say *self-determination*, but the full force of the expression could scarcely be appreciated by those who are not familiar with the philosophical discussion of the Will. Chapter iii. will make the matter clearer.

Mr. Balfour,[1] in criticising Professor T. H. Green's doctrine, maintains that the methods and principles on which that doctrine rests make it "as correct to say that nature makes mind as that mind makes nature; that the world created God as that God created the world." And this contention is applauded by Professor Seth,[2] who, writing of Green's doctrine that mind makes nature, that nature results "from the activity of the spiritual principle," declares that "if we consider the character of the method by which the result is reached, such predicates will appear more than questionable, for the Self is nothing apart from the world. If it is necessary as the sustainer of relations, it is nothing apart from the relations which it sustains. They exist together, or not at all; they exist as two aspects of the same fact." But, as was pointed out in chapter i., the Self is not a mere correlative. It is a correlative and something more. The error of the argument consists in supposing that the relation between the Self and its cosmos of experience is like in kind to the relation between any pair of correlatives within the cosmos. The self is correlative to the cosmos, but it is also the sphere which embraces the two correlatives and holds them in relation. It rises superior to its own opposition to the world. Again, the Self is logically prior to its cosmos of experience, because it constitutes the cosmos, not merely as a whole, but also piecemeal, relation by relation. Furthermore, it can withdraw from the concrete and live in an artificial world of abstractions, and yet remain the same self-identical concrete unit as before.

[1] *Mind*, January 1884, p. 80. The same objection is put in a slightly different way in *Foundations of Belief*, p. 144.

[2] Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 24.

It seems necessary to recur to these distinctions here, because the criticism of Mr. Balfour and Professor Seth is frequently quoted; and it is well to see that, if we are driven to attribute self-consciousness to God, we are not, in consequence, involved in the Pantheistic conclusion which identifies God with His universe.[1]

[1] In his *Foundations of Belief* (pp. 145, 146) Mr. Balfour thrusts the idealist on to the horns of a very ugly-looking dilemma. The argument is as follows: The idealist has to regard God, either as "a combining principle alone," or as "a combining principle considered in its union with the multiplicity which it combines." In the former case, the Deity becomes a "barren abstraction." In the latter case, He "holds in suspension, without preference and without repulsion, every element alike of the knowable world. Of these none, whatever be its nature, be it good or bad, base or noble, can be considered as alien to the Absolute: all are necessary, and all are characteristic."

But the argument, when examined, does not seem to be as conclusive as it appears at first sight. For neither is Spirit a mere abstract form, nor is it merely a form filled with a certain content and so become concrete. The latter expression may be, from one point of view, an admissible description of Nature. But it is not an admissible description of Spirit. For Spirit is not the mere correlative (the other side) of Nature. Spirit is the unit which transcends and unites the two correlatives, or opposites, itself and Nature. It is the true concrete.

And so it comes to pass that *process*, with its oppositions of finite and infinite, good and bad, perfect and imperfect, finds its explanation and resolution in Spirit. If this is not yet quite clear, it is to be hoped it will not remain altogether mysterious to the careful reader of this little book. And, even if a certain amount of difficulty remains, we are not so committed to the Hegelian conception of the spiritual principle as to expect to understand all mysteries.

CHAPTER III

WILL

§ 1. Fundamental Importance of the Problem of the Will.

HITHERTO Spirit has been regarded as knowing subject, and has been approached only by way of the metaphysics of knowledge. But knowledge is only one aspect of spiritual activity. Spirit is the subject which wills as well as the subject which knows.

The question as to the nature of Will lies at the basis of Ethics, for Ethics is the science of conduct, and conduct is voluntary action. This truth has always been perceived by students of Ethics. Hence the fierceness of the controversy which has for ages raged round the problem of volition. The combatants have, for the most part, been divided into two hostile camps, those who maintained the freedom of the will, and those who maintained that will is, in all its operations, subject to the same necessity which binds the physical effect to its physical cause. "Free Will" and "Necessity" have been party war-cries for generations.

There can be no doubt that the battle is a very important one. If the freedom of the will in every sense be given up and necessity prove victorious, the ethical "ought" is left without meaning, and morality becomes a polite fiction. No wonder that the question has been contested as a matter of life and death. Of late years, however,

there has been a growing weariness of the whole discussion. Men have learned to despair of settling by reason a question which, in different forms, engaged the attention of centuries, and yet seemed to remain as insoluble as ever. Most cultivated minds now turn away with suspicion from any attempt to grapple with the old difficulty.

At the same time, there is a very widespread belief that Freedom must be assumed as a practical principle. Morality needs it, and morality is indispensable, therefore the will must be treated as free, even if it is not free. Or, more consistently, the will must be free, because otherwise morality is impossible. This is, in effect, the position of Kant. The categorical imperative, the unconditional command of morality, which carries with it its own necessity, goes upon the assumption that it can be obeyed. It is unmeaning unless the will is free. Therefore, the will is free.

Whoever adopts this position has good reason for his belief, and occupies a stronghold from which he cannot be driven.

But, if the doctrine of the relation between spirit and the world which was set forth above be sound, it is possible to see much deeper into the real state of the case.

§ 2. What is meant by the Will?

Common language would seem to imply some distinction between the will and the man who owns the will. The will, it would be commonly said, is a faculty which the man possesses, and being a possession, it can scarcely be identified with the man himself. But language of this kind only serves to disguise the truth. The will is the man. No other meaning can be assigned to it. As in knowledge, it is the self-conscious subject which knows; so in volition, it is the self-conscious subject which wills. And

the subject which knows is identical with the subject which wills. The agent in volition is simply the self—the man. Any other supposition is due to the confusion caused by abstraction, and by the names which are given to the products of abstraction. Self as willing is abstracted from the whole of experience and is dubbed "the Will," and then the will is taken to be some concrete reality, some element in human nature confusedly conceived as an independent agent. But there is no such agent. The only agent is the self.

When this is admitted an important result ensues. To speak of the will as a cause, or as subject to necessity, is to use unmeaning language. The will is the self, and the self cannot be a cause in the sense in which material things are causes, because causation exists only *for* the self. Causation is a determination of the self, and the self cannot be classed with its own determinations. That which makes causation possible cannot be subject to causation. The doctrine, then, that an act of will is a case of causation, that antecedent and consequent in volition are bound by the same necessity which binds the physical antecedent to its physical consequent in every event in nature, is inadmissible. The rule of necessity holds within nature. It binds together, like an iron framework, every part, every element, in the great articulate whole which we call the world. But, for that very reason, necessity cannot dominate the self which makes the world possible. Spirit cannot take its place as an element in that universal system which exists only for spirit. Determination from without, determination by the not-self, is therefore an impossible theory of the will.

It remains that will must be self-determination. And

this is exactly the demand of morality. Morality cannot accept the theory of necessity, because that theory destroys responsibility. If, in all his actions, a man is controlled from without, praise and blame, approval and disapproval, reward and punishment, rest upon no real basis. But if will is self-determination, if every man must trace his actions to himself ultimately, then, when he sins and suffers, he has no one to blame but himself. Responsibility resumes its meaning. Morality becomes possible.

It is very important to notice here that the theory of will which results from a speculative examination of man's relation to nature is precisely that theory which must be postulated in order to justify man's practical activities. This is a verification of no small value and significance.

§ 3. The term "Free Cause."

Will is commonly spoken of as a "Free Cause." The definition means well, but must be accepted with certain corrections, which are now obvious. It must be understood that Will is only another name for Self, and it must be noted that, if the word *Cause* is to be applied at all to the will, it is to be applied in a sense altogether different from that which it bears when used of natural causes. Even the word *Free* is not without objection, for it seems to suggest a power of unmotived willing which is as contrary to experience as it would be subversive of morality. The term Freedom cannot, perhaps, be dismissed; but, if retained, it must be with the clear understanding that it means self-determination and nothing else.

§ 4. Knowledge and Will.

It is scarcely possible to grasp the full meaning of the doctrine of will which has now been stated, until some account has been given of the relation between knowledge and will as they are united in the activity of the self. The important thing to notice is that they are united. It is only

by an abstraction that knowledge and will can ever be separated. Take knowledge on its most speculative side and it involves an act of attention, which is an act of will. No object of knowledge, not the simplest, can be an object of knowledge, until the self directs itself to it as an object. Self-direction, which is only another name for self-determination, is an essential condition of knowledge. Or, more accurately, the act of knowing is an act of self-determination, an act of will. Again, consider will and it is found to involve knowledge; for will is the direction of self to an end, and in order that there may be this self-direction, there must be some idea of the end. What, then, it may be said, is the meaning of the distinction between "the speculative" and "the practical," if knowledge and will are both involved in every exercise of spiritual activity? The answer seems easy. The distinction is grounded on the nature of the end to which the self is self-directed. If the end be to know or understand anything, the whole process is called speculative. If the end be to do or to produce anything, the whole process is called practical. But, in the process itself, there is no separation of knowledge and will. The two are so inseparable that they can only be regarded as two different aspects of the one activity.

At the same time it seems possible to approach more nearly to the true nature of the self when it is regarded from the side of will than in any other way. The idea of self-determination seems to represent the central truth of spiritual activity more perfectly than any other idea. This will become evident if the conclusions of chapter i., as to the nature of the knowing subject, are read and studied in the light of the doctrine of the will which is here set forth.

The study of the metaphysics of knowledge does not afford a perfectly satisfactory apprehension of the creative, constitutive function of Spirit in its dealing with experience until the great idea of self-determination, as the description of spiritual activity in general, is gained through the consideration of the Will.

It may have seemed, in the examination of the conditions of knowledge, that, as regards some of the elements in experience (for example, the sensational element), a mysterious and inexplicable advance was made from the assertion that phenomena *exist only for* the self, to the assertion that they are *due to the activity of* the self.[1] But now, from the fact that it is only when the self, by an act of attention, has directed itself towards anything that that thing can enter experience, coupled with the fact that every element in experience depends, for its very existence, upon the principle of relation, which is essentially an exercise of the activity of the self, it is plain that even sensation, which was thought by Kant to imply an unknowable source, called the thing-in-itself, owes its existence to the active determination of Spirit. Thus the study of Will serves to complete our thoughts concerning the relation of Spirit and the World.

§ 5. Freedom and Necessity.

It was seen above[2] that the true object in knowledge is not simply one thing, but is always a cosmos of relations. It is always cosmic in form. The knowledge of *A* and the knowledge of *not-A* (all the world but *A*) are precisely the same. In so far as *A* is known, *not-A* is known. Now, since knowledge and will are but two aspects of the same activity, it follows that every act of self-determination, every volition, is a determination, not simply of one thing, but of

[1] See Mr. Balfour in *Mind* for January 1884, p. 78.

[2] Chapter i.

the whole cosmos of experience. It may seem that it ought to be evident directly that self-determination must be world-determination; for self is correlative, not to each object separately, but to the whole, and to each object as an element in the whole. But this argument depends for its force upon its implication of the essential unity of knowledge and will; and it is well that this unity should be made explicit and its consequences recognised fully. Every act of will is, then, an act of self-determination, and consequently an act by which the whole cosmos of experience receives a fresh determination.

Reflection on actual experience shows that this way of looking at things is not so strange as it may appear at first sight. The act by which a man steps out into the open air determines *for his consciousness* the whole vault of heaven and the whole infinity of space relations and colour relations which lie within his field of vision. Every step gives a new adjustment to the whole world as it exists for him. Every act of will casts afresh the whole cosmos of experience.

The determination of any physical effect by its physical cause is an altogether different sort of determination. A ball moves when it is struck by another ball. But both the ball which strikes and the ball which is struck are elements in a world which has no existence except for a self-conscious subject, and the causal necessity which connects the two movements is, in the last resort, a necessity of thought. To class the striking ball and the self-conscious subject together as equally causes and equally necessary in their action is to make a logical blunder of portentous magnitude. And this is the error of the necessitarian.

At the same time, if the chain of necessity be assumed to hold unfailingly throughout all nature, it follows that every

thing and event in nature is connected with every other thing and event by necessary relations. The smallest fact or change has a world-wide connexion and a world-wide significance. Now each part, taken separately, may be determined from without by necessary laws, but what determines the whole? It is not determined from without, for there is no "without" to nature. Nature fills space and time. The conclusion must be that the determination of the world as a whole comes from within. It is self-determination. The self-direction of spirit is, in truth, implied in the very nature of necessity.

And so there is no conflict between Freedom and Necessity. Instead of being contradictory, the two principles imply one another. Freedom is the principle of the determination of the whole. Necessity is the principle of the articulation of the parts. Freedom is self-determination, determination from within. Necessity is determination by the not-self, determination from without. Freedom belongs to Spirit. Necessity belongs to that only to which there is a "without." Freedom expresses the character of the activity which constitutes the cosmos. Necessity expresses the nature of the link which unites every element in the cosmos to every other element. Necessity holds only within the cosmos, and therefore cannot be the principle which controls the whole, either on the subjective side or on the objective side.

6. Determinism.

There remains one question concerning the Will which demands careful examination. Conduct is determined by motives, how then can the Will be free, how can self be self-determined? The Determinist[1] holds that in every

[1] J. S. Mill may be regarded as a typical Determinist. See *Logic*, bk. vi. ch. ii., and *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton*, ch. xxvi.

case volition is determined by the strongest motive. In most cases the man yields at once because there is just one motive influencing him at the time. But sometimes there is a conflict. Opposing motives meet in his mind, and whichever motive is strongest prevails and, consequently, determines the action. But, in no case, according to this theory, can the man be said to be self-determined. The mind is regarded as a field whereon motives of many sorts contend and decide. Action always follows, and must follow, the strongest motive; just as the physical effect always follows, and must follow, the physical cause. The Determinist goes further still, and refers all motives to facts and events which he regards as independent of the will. He makes the decisions of the self arise ultimately by physical causation out of the not-self. Motives, according to this theory, originate from the interaction of character and circumstances. Any one who knew a man's character and circumstances accurately, could foretell his conduct with unerring precision. Character alters, of course, during life, but it alters according to necessary laws. It must be traced ultimately to circumstances, the constitution of the man's bodily organism, the things and events he has seen and experienced, and certain mental predispositions which are his by heredity.

This theory seems very plausible. For a long time it held its ground against all assailants. But its apparent triumph was due to the fact that its opponents contended too often for freedom in the sense of unmotived[1] willing, and in doing so found themselves at war with experience. Action which can be called conduct can always be traced to motives, and no amount of discussion

[1] The "freedom of indifference."

will convince of the contrary any one who takes his experience as he finds it. There is no meaning in the assertion that an act of will is an act of unmotived choice, for every act of will involves the seeking of some end.

The criticism of Professor T. H. Green[1] is, however, quite irresistible. The whole argument of the Determinist rests upon an ambiguity in the word *motive*.

In order that this may be clearly seen, it is necessary to recall some psychological definitions.

§ 7. Desire.

Conduct has always some reference to *Desire*. *Desire* or *Passion* (using these terms in their widest sense) is perhaps best described as the consciousness of a felt want. Desires or Passions have usually been divided into three classes:—appetites, desires proper, and affections. The appetites take their rise from bodily wants, and tend to bodily satisfactions. The desires proper are those passions which take their rise from wants other than bodily, and rest in things as their proper objects. The affections are passions which have for their objects not things but persons. These are the old distinctions. We shall, however, in our discussion, use the word *desire* in its wider sense, including in it the appetites, desires proper, and affections. It is well to be clear, because much confusion arises from the ambiguities of these terms.[2]

In addition to the feeling of a want, desire supposes the existence of some object by which the want can be satisfied.

[1] See *Prolegomena to Ethics*, bk. ii. ch. i. The discussion of the question which follows is, in the main, a brief outline of that given by Green.

[2] The term "interest" is a useful one. Its chief disadvantage is its ambiguity. It is best employed to mean a desire whose object is mainly intellectual or æsthetic. Thus it is usual to speak of the desires for fame and money, but of the interests in science and art.

Desire tends to the satisfaction of its corresponding want by the attainment of its proper object. But how is that attainment accomplished? A want may be satisfied either instinctively or voluntarily. If it is satisfied instinctively, the act by which the object is attained cannot be called conduct. If it is satisfied in any way which can be called conduct (*i.e.* properly human or moral action), the whole situation may be analysed into the following factors or stages:—[1]

(1) The want.

(2) The feeling of the want.

(3) An idea of an object by which the want can be satisfied.

(4) An idea of the satisfaction actually taking place, the work of the imagination.

(5) The presentation of this satisfaction as, under the circumstances, the greatest good. The self identifying itself with the attainment of the object; finding in the realisation of the idea, not the satisfaction of a want merely, but the satisfaction of self.

§ 8. The Motive.

Now it is only this final stage in the process which can be called the motive. When this stage has been reached the act follows inevitably. Once the man has identified himself with the attainment of the object, once he has presented this attainment to himself as his greatest good, there is no hesitation, no doubt as to his conduct. So that it may be truly said that the motive determines the act.

[1] Opinions differ as to how many of these stages should be included in *the Desire.* That term is sometimes used so as to include the first two, sometimes the first three, sometimes all but the last. This last meaning is, most certainly, correct.

When the motive has been formed, the act is inevitable. The motive is, in truth, simply the inner side of the act.

But it is also plain that there is only one motive. A conflict of motives is impossible. A "strongest motive" is an absurdity. What is called a conflict of motives is properly a conflict of desires. The man may be conscious of several wants. His imagination can form mental pictures of the satisfaction of these wants, the attainment of the respective objects, and can compare them together and debate their comparative worth.[1] In this sense there can be a conflict of desires. But to speak of a conflict of motives, and at the same time to speak of the motive as the determinant of action, is to use ambiguous language. The motive which is the determinant of action stands alone. There is no other mental fact on the same level with it. Conflict is impossible.

But perhaps it may seem that by shifting the conflict from the motive to the desire nothing has been gained for the cause of Free Will. Although it may be improper to speak of the strongest motive, still, it may be thought, there is such a thing as the strongest desire, and it is this strongest desire which determines the formation of the motive and hence decides the act. But the moment the argument is thrown into this form its unsoundness is apparent. For there is nothing commoner in experience than the resisting of the desire which is strongest at the moment. A man may be shaken and rent by some stormy passion, and yet resist it successfully as long as he keeps in view some principle of action which he recognises as in-

[1] It seems to be this use of the imagination which gives plausibility to the opinion that there is a conflict of motives, by hiding the essential difference between the motive proper and all mere desires.

volving, under the circumstances, his greatest good. Yet this principle of action may be one which has no emotional force. It may be mere prudence. It may be a passionless consideration of duty. But let him lose sight of this principle and, even for a moment, come to regard the object of the passion as his highest good, and he will be swept away. Unless some physical difficulty stands in the way, the strong passion will prevail, and the act will be performed. And so it is evident that in the conflict of desires "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." The issue depends upon the action of the self identifying its own satisfaction with the satisfaction of some particular desire. When that step is taken the desire changes shape instantly. It ceases to be a mere desire. It becomes a motive. It ceases to contend. Weak or strong, it prevails without contest, and determines the act with unquestioned authority.

§ 9. Character and Circumstances.

But the Determinist has another argumentative resource open to him. In such cases, he will say, the man decides, not freely in any true sense of the term, but as his character and the circumstances in which he is placed determine. Action is the joint outcome of circumstances and character.

It may be granted at once that action is the expression of character as it reacts upon circumstances. Punishment (whether inflicted with a view to prevent future crime, or for the sake of the criminal himself, or simply from considerations of justice) always goes upon the supposition that action represents character. Every attempt at reformation, every method of moral discipline and instruction, makes the same assumption. But character is not to be regarded as a fixture. It varies in some degree with every act. The character of the man after the performance of

any act is different from what it was before the act, some habit has been strengthened or weakened. But whence the change? To what source is it to be imputed? The Determinist would say, it is due to the circumstances in which the man was placed. It was these circumstances which decided the man, and gave a new determination to his character. The answer to this assertion must be an emphatic negative. The whole argument overlooks the fact that no circumstance can exist for a man, except as determined by himself. Each circumstance occurs as an element in the man's experience, and its very existence as a determinant of action depends upon the self-conscious subject (*i.e.* the man himself) which makes the whole cosmos of experience possible. The argument assumes that circumstances stand to a man in a relation similar to that in which they stand to an unconscious thing. The unconscious thing has a character, and its movements are the necessary result of its circumstances and character combined. But, to a person, neither character nor circumstances are what they are to a thing. A bodily want does not stand to a self-conscious subject in the same relation in which it stands to a creature without a self-presenting consciousness. Hunger, for instance, may be said to stimulate to action the sea-anemone as well as the man. But is hunger the same in both cases? Not unless the sea-anemone consciously presents to itself an idea of an object which can satisfy the want, and then consciously directs itself to the realisation of the idea, identifying its personal satisfaction with the satisfaction of a particular want. This is the process through which the man goes when he satisfies his hunger in any way which can be called conduct. But every step in this process, from the first

recognition of the want to that direction of self towards the object which constitutes the act of will, owes its peculiar character to the fact that it exists for the self-conscious subject, the man, as an element in his experience.

Now, if even the circumstances which influence conduct owe their peculiar character to the self, how much more must the act of self-direction of which the man is distinctly conscious be referred to the self. In that moment of self-direction, character receives a new adjustment due to the impulse of the self as it reacts upon circumstances. The external result is then, truly enough, the joint outcome of the circumstances and of the character. But it is the outcome of the character, not as it was before the act of self-direction, but as the act of self-direction made it to be. In the full-grown man, the man who is capable of self-reflection, habits have already become so developed that, when he looks within in order to interrogate his own consciousness, he seems to find himself in the presence of a fixed order which he calls his character. It seems something imposed upon him from without, which he must take as he finds it. This seeming is, however, an illusion. Character is Self-created.[1] It has a definite history, and

[1] For a further discussion of the meaning of this, see part ii. chap. i. Mr. Balfour, in his *Foundations of Belief* (part ii. chap. ii. p. 147 note), urges against Green's doctrine of freedom, which is almost identical with that given above, that it fails to justify responsibility. "It is impossible to say of him (the agent) that he 'ought,' and therefore he 'can.' For at any given moment of his life his next action is by hypothesis strictly determined. This is also true of every previous moment. . . ." Thus ultimately character itself and its whole outcome in action "may be traced to pre-natal, and possibly to purely material, antecedents." Such a theory would indeed destroy responsibility.

It must be admitted that Green's language and mode of presenting

every event in that history has been moulded by the self-determination of the subject.[1] But this self-determination is not a stage in the history. The act of self-direction cannot take its place as one element in a series of natural events. It is not an event in time, an event determined by previous events. It is a timeless act which gives a new adjustment to the whole cosmos of experience.

And this leads at once to the characteristic distinction between acts of will and natural events of all kinds. The distinction has been implied all through, and has been already expressed in several ways. It can now be clearly stated and understood.

§ 10. Characteristic Peculiarity of Will.

Every natural event is determined by causes which are previous in order of time. The cause is the antecedent, the event is the consequent. The whole course of what are called events is a series in time.

An act of will is altogether different. It is determined by an idea of an end not yet realised. It is thus time-

his theory lay him open to this criticism. But it does not touch the essential part of his theory, his doctrine of the *motive.* The question is: what is character? If character be defined to be a set of dispositions, then the act is not the outcome of the character and circumstances merely. For these dispositions mean simply the presence to the mind of certain desires according to the various circumstances of the man's life. Now desire, as shown above, is not motive: it does not inevitably produce conduct. Between desire and conduct there intervenes that act of self-determination which transforms the raw material into the finished product. But this consideration reveals the insufficiency of the definition of character. Man's true self-expression is to be found in the determinations of his will, and not in his desires. Or, in other words, character is more than dispositions. It is self possessing dispositions, not dispositions forming self.

[1] It is not denied that man's activity and character-data must be founded on some deeper truth. But this basis is not to be found in nature.

less[1] in its origin. It is, in fact, from its very nature, the self-determination of a self-presenting subject; for not only does the idea of the end lie altogether within the subject, but its adoption by the subject as his personal good is his self-expression. The very fact, then, that volition is determined by motives is enough to overthrow the doctrine of Necessity, or Determinism, in all its forms. *The Will is Free, just because it is determined by motives.*

And here rises into view in another form the essential distinction as well as the essential relation between Spirit and Nature.

It is a fundamental characteristic of Spirit that the End, the Final Cause, is the true source of action, the guiding principle to which all process must be referred. The End is the explanation of the beginning. In nature, on the other hand, and in science, the study of nature, the order

[1] This timelessness of volition is puzzling, because it is impossible to separate in thought the act of volition itself from reflection upon the act. That the act is timeless is evident from this, that in it the future governs the present. And that it must be timeless should be evident to any one who has grasped the conclusions of chap. i., for there it was shown that the self cannot be in time because it makes time possible. Now it is in the very act of volition that the self gives possibility to time. Hence the act of volition must be essentially timeless. But, just as, when self reflects upon itself, the subject loses its true character, is objectified, and by its representative takes its place as an element in experience; so, when volition is reflected on, the pure act vanishes, and its representative appears as one in the series of temporal events. Thus the act of will seems to be, what it is not, a stage in the man's history, Once again we are face to face with the truth which we have already dwelt upon at sufficient length: self is always the background of thought.

If these considerations are kept in mind they will prevent much misunderstanding, and much of that confusion of thought which the inevitable ambiguities of language are likely to occasion.

of time, not of logic, must be observed. The effect must be referred to the cause, the consequent to the antecedent.

But, though there is a contrast between the two sets of terms, Spirit, End, Self-determination or Freedom, on the one hand, and Nature, Cause, Necessity, on the other, yet Spirit and Nature are not mere parallels, mere correlatives.

Spirit overreaches Nature; for it is only when Nature is taken piecemeal that the physical order can be maintained. View Nature as a whole, and instantly the logical order asserts itself. And so it happens that, even in science, when large views are taken, the End looms in sight. The conception of purpose creeps in. The more consistent the effort to regard Evolution as a theory of universal process, the more impossible does it become to exclude all reference to an End.[1] Nature must find its explanation in Spirit, not Spirit in Nature.

[1] This is latent all through Mr. H. Spencer's writings.

CHAPTER IV

WILL AND NATURE

§ 1. Nature dominated by an End.

KNOWLEDGE and Will have been shown to be two aspects of the one activity—the activity of self-determination. It is not surprising, then, in view of the conclusions of chapter ii., that the examination of the conditions of volition should result in the doctrine that Spirit makes Nature possible, or, in other words, that the possibility of Nature implies the Personality of God. When Nature is viewed as a whole, Spirit is revealed. The very universality of the principle of necessity within Nature implies self-determination, or Freedom, as the principle which determines Nature as a whole. Now we have seen that it is of the very essence of Freedom, or self-determination, that it is determination by reference to an End. Nature is then dominated by an End or Final Cause.

§ 2. The Absolute Good.

In the analysis of the motive it was found that the idea of a "Good" enters into every act of will. It is not until the subject presents to himself the satisfaction of a want as under the circumstances his greatest good, not until he identifies himself with the attainment of the satisfaction, that the volition takes place. Self-realisation in an End is the very essence of will; just as knowledge involves subject and object, so Will involves Subject and End. And

in this opposition of Subject and End the idea of *the Good* lies implicit. The End in which the self seeks realisation (or satisfaction) is always conceived as "Good," or "Good for self." Anything which is a possible object of desire, and which so can become an End for self, may be thought of as "a Good," but only relatively. "The Good" is always that in which, under the circumstances, self, and not any mere desire, finds satisfaction. Self-direction to the good is the very essence of freedom.

When, therefore, nature is found to be the expression of freedom, and to involve an end to which its whole process is relative, there results the conception of a "good" which obviously does not depend upon the peculiarities of any individual. The end of nature is the *absolute good*.

§ 3. Good and Evil.

But does not this *good* seem altogether remote from the good of man? We are not yet in a position to discuss this question adequately. One thing, however, seems clear: the end for God—the end of nature—cannot be what man would call *evil*. In Professor Maguire's words:—"The end cannot be evil. Why not? Cannot we imagine an all-powerful Demon using his omniscience and omnipotence to gratify his malignity? Milton's Satan exclaims: 'evil, be thou my good!' Why may not God Almighty do the same? Impossible, for the reason that evil is, as was seen by Plato, ὑπεναντίον τι—a subcontrary to good. We can imagine the Demon, but we cannot think him out, for evil is at variance with itself as well as with the good. Pirates, says Plato, hold together so far as they are just, not so far as they are unjust. *Minus* presupposes *plus*, but *plus* does not presuppose *minus*, and an all-pervading *minus* is an absurdity. Granting that we cannot see the end in its

fulness—granting that no man is, as Plato would say, wise —we are, for all that, as completely justified in denying its badness as if we could. Badness is putting a lower category partially above a higher, and this *ex vi termini* cannot be universal."[1]

[1] Maguire, *Lectures on Philosophy*, p. 104.

CHAPTER V

COMMUNITY

Two questions have long ere this forced themselves on the attention of the reader. First, What is the relation between Spirit and Spirit, between man and man, and between God and each finite Spirit? Secondly, How is it possible to account for the limitations of human power? If the Freedom of the subject is the principle which determines the whole cosmos of experience, how is it that we are so conscious of our ignorance and our impotence?

§ 1. Two Questions.

The first of these two questions indicates the point of discontinuity in all idealist systems. The Idealist seeks to draw a plan of the universe as a whole. It must be "all one piece." If any element refuses to take its place in his plan, the system fails. Now in most modern systems a great break occurs at the point where the effort is made to distinguish, and at the same time to reconcile, the human spirit and the Divine. Even Hegelianism, the greatest and most profound of all Idealisms, seems to have escaped the difficulty only by avoiding it. By constantly speaking of Spirit as if it were impersonal (instead of personal, as it essentially is), Hegel was able to shift the standpoint of his inquiry from the human to the Divine, and from the Divine to the human. In the words of Professor

§ 2. The Point of Discontinuity in all Idealisms.

Seth: "If we scrutinise the system narrowly, we find Spirit or the Absolute doing duty at one time for God, and at another time for man; but when we have got hold of the Divine end we have lost our grasp of the human end, and *vice versâ.* We never have the two together, but sometimes the one and sometimes the other—a constant alternation, which really represents two different lines of thought in the system, and two different conclusions to which it leads. But the alternation is so skilfully managed by Hegel himself that it appears to be not alternation but union."[1]

Nor is Green more successful than Hegel. Profoundly important and valuable as is his discussion of the philosophical basis of Ethics, it is impossible to be satisfied with his account of the relation between the spiritual principle in Nature and the spiritual principle in the Individual thinker. "In the growth of our experience," says Green, "in the process of our learning to know the world, an animal organism, which has its history in time, gradually becomes the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness. What we call our mental history is not a history of this consciousness, which in itself can have no history, but a history of the process by which the animal organism becomes its vehicle. 'Our consciousness' may mean either of two things: either a function of the animal organism which is being made, gradually and with interruptions, a vehicle of the eternal consciousness; or that eternal consciousness itself, as making the animal organism its vehicle and subject to certain limitations in so doing, but retaining its essential characteristic as independent of time, as the determinant of becoming, which has not and

[1] Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 156.

does not itself become. The consciousness which varies from moment to moment, which is in succession, and of which each successive state depends on a series of 'external and internal' events, is consciousness in the former sense. It consists in what may properly be called phenomena; in successive modifications of the animal organism, which would not, it is true, be what they are if they were not media for the realisation of an eternal consciousness, but which are not this consciousness. On the other hand, it is this latter consciousness, as so far realised in or communicated to us through modification of the animal organism that constitutes our knowledge, with the relations, characteristic of knowledge, into which time does not enter, which are not in becoming, but are once for all what they are."[1] Again, "It would seem that the attainment of the knowledge is only explicable as a reproduction of itself, in the human soul, by the consciousness for which the cosmos of related facts exists—a reproduction of itself, in which it uses the sentient life of the soul as its organ."[2] Here the "Eternal Consciousness," the "Consciousness for which the cosmos of related facts exists" means God. Either, therefore, man is deprived of all real self-hood, or the Self in man is identified with God. It is only the double use of the word "consciousness" which prevents this alternative from being instantly apparent. "Our Consciousness," in its first sense, simply means the succession of internal phenomena, what used to be called the series of "states of consciousness," what is now frequently called "the empirical self."[3] But this succession of phenomena

[1] *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 72. [2] *Ibid.* p. 77.

[3] The phrase "empirical self" is also used in a more limited sense. See chap. i. § 9, note.

is not the man. There is no self in it. If, in its isolation, it has a right to be called consciousness, it cannot lay claim to self-consciousness. In the second sense, "consciousness" implies self-consciousness, and this is the sense in which "my consciousness" means "myself." The only fair interpretation, then, which can be put upon Green's doctrine is that he identified the self in every man with God. But this is a position which cannot be maintained. Self is no mere abstract principle of unity. Self is the ultimate concrete unit of the cosmos of experience. Self is for every man unique and ultimate. Further, the identification of the self in every man with God involves the identification of all human selves. But since each self is for itself unique and ultimate, this identification amounts to a denial of the essential nature of self-hood. The one instance of a plurality which the self cannot unify, is the plurality of selves. Every person is separated from every other person by an abyss which thought cannot bridge;[1] and any doctrine which leads to the identification of all persons reduces itself thereby to an absurdity.

§ 3. Personality an Imperfect Definition of the Divine Nature.

Here, then, we seem to find ourselves face to face with a multiplicity for which there is no unifying principle. It is, however, a multiplicity which cannot, properly speaking, be an object of thought at all. When a subject is thought, it becomes *ipso facto* an object, and loses its essence. Subject as subject cannot be an object of thought. Subject as subject is for thought always in the background. The subject is for itself ultimate, and also one. A multitude of subjects cannot then, except symbolically, become an object of thought. But this symbolical representation, which is expressed by the phrase "multitude of subjects,"

[1] See Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, pp. 64, 216.

must be accepted as corresponding to a reality. The mere incapacity of our thought can never drive us, do what we will, to deny the self-hood of other men. Solipsism is an impossible philosophy. Every one must believe in the existence of a vast multitude of beings spiritual like himself.[1]

This admission carries with it an important consequence. We saw above that the possibility of Nature implies the Personality of God. Now we see that, though God must be regarded as Personal, Personality cannot be considered a full definition of the Divine Nature. If God were merely Personal, we should be constrained to think of Him as isolated from His creatures. He would take His place as one in a multitude. Such a view is, of course, impossible; and we are forced to believe that, though personal, He is yet more than personal.

§ 4. Ultimate Unity.

In strict logic it seems impossible to go further, for the unity of the self is the impenetrable basis of all explanation. But the fact is that we are driven on at least one step further. It is impossible to end in a disconnected multiplicity. The mind is compelled in spite of itself, if only for regulative purposes, to suppose some principle of unity deeper than the unity of self-consciousness. One fact affords a certain amount of guidance in this difficulty: the cosmos of experience is, as we saw above, identical with a part of nature. On the objective side, nature is a whole which integrates all possible experiences. Surely there must be something to correspond on the subjective side? Yet thought contains no principle capable of unifying a subjective multiplicity. It is necessary, therefore, to suppose

[1] See Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief* (pp. 148-151) for a brilliant statement of the difficulty expounded in this section.

that there is in God a transcendent principle by which He forms the ultimate bond of union among the multitude of persons. Of course it is easy to see that this doctrine is open to the objection that it is an application of the categories of thought beyond their legitimate sphere. And the only answer that can be given is that the category which is so applied is the basal category of *Unity*, and that it is impossible to avoid believing in the ultimate unity of the universe. The belief may be simply regulative, the idea may be merely symbolical, but an ultimate Unity is necessary for thought, for life, and for sanity.

God is then *Personal*, but He is also *more than Personal;* for He transcends and unites all mere persons in His transcendent unity. As *Person*, He gives possibility to nature; as *more than Person*, He gives possibility to the multitude of spirits. It may be said of Him, that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being"; that He is "the source," on the one hand, of all subjects, and, on the other hand, of all objects. But such expressions correspond to a reality which transcends thought. They are phrases "thrown out" at a truth too great for human intelligence. As to the mode of the union of all spirits in God we are ignorant, and must remain ignorant as long as our faculties are what they are. The principle which makes the union possible is inscrutable, but the fact of the union must be assumed as the ultimate basis of all coherence, speculative and practical.[1]

§ 5. Summary.

We have now been led to certain definite conclusions.

[1] It is interesting to note that this conception (if conception it can be called) of God as Personal, but as, at the same time, a transcendent principle of unity superior to the unity of Personality, is essentially the conception of the Divine Nature which is involved in the doctrine of the Trinity.

The possibility of experience yields belief in man as a Spirit. The possibility of nature yields belief in God as Spirit. The possibility of a world of spirits yields belief in God as more than personal, as the ultimate principle which transcends and unites all persons in His transcendent unity.

§ 6. Human Limitation.

The second difficulty which was mentioned above must now be considered. How is it possible to account for the limitation of human knowledge and power? If the Freedom of the subject is the principle which determines the whole cosmos of experience, how is it that we are so conscious of our ignorance and our impotence? In answer to this question, it is first of all necessary to observe that freedom does not mean the ability to know everything or to do anything. That this should seem to be the meaning is part of the inconvenience which, as already explained, attends the use of the term freedom to express the activity of self-determination. We saw that freedom and necessity correspond, the one implies the other. The perfection of freedom corresponds, then, to the perfection of necessity. But necessity would be perfect if the cosmos of experience were perfectly rational, if the internal articulation of the system were complete. The measure, then, of human freedom is the degree of rationality of the corresponding cosmos, and the measure of human limitation is to be sought in the degree to which that cosmos is found to be irrational. We are not, then, to regard such facts as that we cannot transport ourselves to Saturn, or see the other side of the moon, as indications of a want of freedom. Such limitations are, if properly understood, but limitations of one part of the cosmos by other parts according to necessary laws, and consequently are marks of freedom, inasmuch as they prove the presence of a rational order in the cosmos.

§ 7. The Contingent

There are, however, real limitations of the activity of self-determination (or freedom), for the cosmos of experience is not a perfect cosmos. It does not form a completely articulated system. It is not perfectly rational. If it were, every element would be necessary. But every element is not necessary. Side by side with the necessary we must recognise the contingent. It is true that every element in the cosmos of experience is connected with every other element by an indefinite number of relations, but the articulation of the system cannot be considered perfect unless all these relations are seen to form a perfectly rational system. It is impossible, however, to find in nature, as it is known in experience, such a system. Nothing is more remarkable than the random and apparently irrational manner in which things are collocated in nature as we know it. They are all related to one another, but the manner of their correlation seems, in a multitude of instances, to be quite unmeaning; to be devoid, that is, of all rational arrangement.[1] Translating this, as far as possible, into language which expresses the fact on its subjective side, and remembering that *relation* is the work of the self, it means that the world-constituting activity of the self is subject in its operation to some limiting influence. Self is the principle of intelligence, and it is surely impossible to suppose that, operating in the perfect unlimited activity of self-determination, intelligence works out, in a multitude of

[1] Professor A. Seth shows that the Hegelian system fails to explain the contingency of nature. He also shows how Hegel endeavoured to escape from the difficulty. See *Hegelianism and Personality*, pp. 130-140.

It is amusing to note the half-suppressed dislike with which Hegel regarded an element which refused to take a comfortable place in his system. See his *Logic*, pp. 263, 264 (Professor Wallace's translation).

cases, its own confusion. Now what is the origin of this limitation? It is not due to the presence in the cosmos of any lurking residuum of fact independent of spirit; for contingent phenomena exist as they are related (determined by the self, that is), just as much as those phenomena whose rational necessity is most obvious. This limitation must, then, be traced to a higher source, to the existence and operation of the multitude of Spirits, each of whom, in the exercise of his self-determination, imposes limits upon all the rest. Further, it must not be forgotten that above this multitude of spirits there is one who is Spirit and more than Spirit, one who is the ultimate source of all being subjective and objective.

§ 8. Another Statement of the Argument.

The argument may be put also in the following manner. It is only spirit or more than spirit that can limit spirit. The very fact that no other spirit but the self of the thinker can be known as spirit (that is, as subject) shows the possibility of a real limitation to the exercise of spiritual activity. As Hegel points out, to be conscious of a limit is to have already passed it.[1] If a limit is to be set to the operation of spirit it must be set by that which cannot, except symbolically, become an object of thought. Nothing within the cosmos, nothing which can enter consciousness, can limit spirit. Spirit must be limited from without[2] or not limited at all. In other words, the mere fact that spirits exclude one another proves that they limit one another.

[1] Hegel, of course, uses this principle to prove that spirit is all-inclusive. The logical result is, as pointed out above, either to deny the personality of man, or to adopt the absurdity of individualist idealism. See Hegel's *Logic*, Wallace's translation, p. 116.

[2] The word "without" is, of course, used here in a symbolical sense. It has no reference to space.

§ 9. The Principle of Community.

The two conclusions at which we have arrived from our consideration of the two difficulties raised at the beginning of this chapter unite to form a conception of fundamental importance in ethical theory. All Persons limit one another, and all persons are one in God. Hence all Persons form a *community*. The End of one is the End of all. The End of the universe is the End of man. The Absolute Good is the true Good for every person.

NOTE TO CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE IMAGE IN MAN

Though self is logically the ultimate unit for every thinker, it is impossible not to believe that personality, as it is in man, is derived from God. The mode of its derivation cannot be *thought*, because the act of thought implies the subordination of the object of thought to the self, and so self would be prior to its own derivation. But this does not settle the question, for we are forced to believe in the plurality of spirits and each member of a plurality cannot be ultimate. As one in a multitude, man must believe in his subordination to, and derivation from, that ultimate totality, that highest principle of explanation, which he calls God. Here man bows in reverence to the source of his being and capacities. But, as a person, man claims kinship with God—bears, to use the familiar language of theology, the divine image—for God is personal, as well as more than personal.

Again, the vastness of nature compared with the cosmos of any experience leads to the same result. Experience is but a part, nature is the whole. The self-determination of every person produces a cosmic result which is identical with a part of God's world. The laws and collocations of experience are the laws and collocations of nature. Surely the self-determination of the subject, though ultimate for self, must represent

the human side of some divine truth. There must be some organic connexion between God and man. It is easy, of course, to point out the illogical nature of this language. At the same time it is impossible to get rid of the conviction that it represents a truth.

The idea of the Divine Image in man involves, then, two elements: man's likeness to God, and derivation from God.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

§ 1. Summary of Results.

MAN is a Spirit or Person. He is a Self-conscious, Self-objectifying, Agent. He is not an element in Nature. His body and his sensitive life belong to Nature; but the man himself, the Ego, is not in any proper sense of the term natural.

Will is another name for the self or man exercising his proper activity. Will is free, not in the sense of being unmotived, but in the sense of being self-determined. Will is self-determination. Every volition is relative to an End. The idea of the End is the motive. The motive is the idea, not of a possible End, but of *the End;* that is, of the End, with which the man, in performing the act, identifies himself. The End with which the man identifies himself is called *the good.* The object of the Will is always conceived as *the good.* Every End is, in man, relative to some desire; but the End of every desire is not conceived as *the good.* The End of a desire may be conceived as *a good*, but it does not become *the good* until the man identifies his satisfaction with its attainment.[1] *The good* means here, not any supposed absolute good, but that which the man in

[1] This passage should be read in close connexion with §§ 7 and 8 of chap. iii.

performing the volition adopts as, under the circumstances, his greatest good.

God is personal. He is Spirit. But, at the same time, He is more than spirit. His nature involves some principle which transcends and unites all spirits in its transcendent unity.

Because God is Personal, Nature is relative to an End. The process of Nature is the expression of Divine self-determination, and is therefore moving towards the realisation of an End. Thus the conception of an Absolute Good is justified. The End of Nature is the Absolute Good.

All Persons limit one another and are, at the same time, one in God. They form, therefore, a true community. The end of one is the end of each and of all. The Absolute Good is the true Good for every person. It is to be noted that the connexion among persons which makes them one is *intrinsic*. It arises out of their connexion with God, who, however mystical the expression may seem, must be regarded as the source from which all persons derive their being and nature.

§ 2. Insecure Position of Ordinary Morality.

Some of these conclusions may seem to resemble rather the mysteries of religion than the doctrines of philosophy. It will be soon apparent that it is their religious character which gives them their ethical value.

Ordinary unreflective morality is liable to sceptical attack in two especial ways: by the denial of the existence of any absolute moral standard, and by the challenging the individual to give any reasonable account of the duty to regard the good of others. Unless ethical theory is able to defend itself from assault on these two sides, it can never occupy a secure position.

§ 3. Scepticism.

From the time of Protagoras the Sophist down to the present day, there have not been wanting theorists to find in the rules of morality mere opinion or convention. The modern habit of regarding the idea of Evolution as, in an indefinite way, a sufficient explanation of everything has given new life and new popularity to this view. It is true, no doubt, that thinkers like Mr. Spencer profess to find in the doctrine of Evolution the basis of an absolute ethic. But it seems impossible to convince the average man that rules of conduct, which are merely the conditions of social health, and are due to the struggle for existence, can have that necessary character which alone can withstand the shock of passion. An absolute ethic which is the result of Evolution, which comes from beneath and not from above, is, to the human heart, as it were relative. It has not the majesty of a real absolute, and that for the simple reason that it is *not* the real absolute; and the instinct of the average man is truer than the insight of the evolutionist, and detects the want of genuine authority.[1] Apart, however, from the question of the sufficiency of Evolutionary Ethics, the fact remains that doubt as to the reality of an absolute ethical end has ever been, and is still, one of the most fatal of moral dangers. The mere possibility of holding that morality is relative provides a refuge for all who desire to gratify their private inclinations in defiance of the law.

Belief in a personal God at once destroys this refuge. The personality of God carries with it the existence of an Absolute End to which the whole course of Nature is relative. This End is the Absolute Good, and is the dominating principle of the whole process of the cosmos.

[1] See part iii. chap. iv. for a criticism of Evolutionary Ethics.

The Personal element in the Divine Nature also implies man's kinship with God, and, along with our necessary belief in God's transcendent unity, forces us to find in the Absolute Good the common necessary end, to the attainment of which all our powers should be directed.

§ 4. Egoism.

The second way in which ordinary unreflective morality lies open to sceptical attack marks the point of failure in every moral system which attempts to be independent of religious ideas. Why should a man love his neighbour as himself? Why should he do to others as he would like others to do to him? Why should he recognise the claim of others to equal consideration with himself? Why should he feel bound to give to others their due, except in so far as regard for their welfare will subserve his own? These questions are, in truth, unanswerable from the standpoint of every ethical system which bases itself on grounds of mere "naturalism." They are not really answerable on any grounds but those which, though they may be justified by philosophical considerations, are distinctly religious in character. Let the sceptic dare to adopt the attitude of Epicurus, and maintain that private pleasure in the sense of a life of wise, refined enjoyment is the one reasonable end of conduct; let him maintain that friendship is only valuable as a contribution to personal happiness; that honesty is to be pursued because it is the best policy, and for that reason only; that the welfare of society is to be regarded only in so far as it subserves the interest of the individual, and he is unassailable by reason in its ordinary scientific exercise. Man, in the exercise of his reason, is essentially self-bound. The instincts of his sensitive nature and the customs of the society to which he belongs may

make him act in a way which seems to imply regard for others, as though of their own right they had a claim to his regard, but let him ask himself the simple questions, Why am I bound to regard others? Why should I recognise that they possess any rights, except in so far as such recognition helps me to the gaining of what I wish? and ordinary reason can provide no answer. It is useless to argue that experience proves that the man who most respects the welfare of his fellow-men is, in the end, the best off. Such an argument only justifies unselfishness by reducing it to selfishness. The fact remains that reason cannot escape the circle of the self. Every man is, as a reasonable being, his own end. Every act of will exemplifies the truth of the assertion. What the man seeks in the effort of will is some end which he selects as his personal good, some object with which he identifies his personal satisfaction. The will is by nature egoistic. It is self-objectifying. Thus man is an end to himself. It does not follow, however, that because every man is an end to himself that therefore every other man is an end to him. The scientific use of reason provides no principle capable of proving such a proposition. On the contrary, the reason of every man exalts him to a supreme position, a position of unique and commanding importance. For the ordinary consciousness, no other individual can stand on a level with the self. Mr. Kidd is therefore right when, in his *Social Evolution*, he describes reason as essentially anti-social. Why should the individual subordinate his private interests to the interests of the community? Why should he deny himself pleasure that others may benefit? No purely reasonable answer can be given to these questions. If they are to be answered at all, the answer must, to some extent

at all events, transcend reason,[1] or, as Mr. Kidd puts it, be ultra-rational. Self, like a despot, dominates the whole realm of experience, and, unless mastered by some superior principle, must wage unceasing war against all who would pretend to equal authority.

[1] This ought to be obvious to any one who followed the exposition of the last five chapters. Reason here simply means the principle of intelligence or the self. Surely it is plain that it is necessary to transcend self in order to reduce self to the position of one in a multitude of equally important selves.

APPENDICES TO PART I

I

ON THE PROOFS OF THE BEING OF GOD

THERE are three time-honoured proofs of the being of God: the cosmological, the teleological, and the ontological.

§ 1. The Cosmological Proof.

The cosmological proof, or, as it is generally described, the argument from the contingency of the world, reasons from the existence of the world to a First Cause. Every effect must have a cause; and, since the world exists as an effect, the world must have a cause. This cause, again, is itself an effect, and must be due to some other cause; and this cause must, in turn, be traced to some other cause superior to itself. We are thus constrained to choose between the supposition of an eternal regress from effect to cause and the supposition that at some point in the series there is a First Cause, to whose agency the whole is due.

This First Cause must be Eternal, Infinite, and Absolute. It must be eternal and infinite, because if it were finite in time or space there would be an eternity before it or an infinity outside it which would be either uncaused or caused by something else. That is, there would be either the impossibility of an effect without a cause, or the admission that the supposed first cause is not really first. The First Cause must be absolute, because it cannot be dependent upon its relation to anything else. If it were so dependent it would not be the first cause. It would be an effect of that upon which it depends.

But these conclusions, which seem at first sight so satisfactory, reveal, on further examination, the weakness of the

cosmological argument. The First Cause cannot be infinite just because it is a cause. We conclude the existence of the First Cause, because the world exists as an effect. But cause and effect, as correlatives, mutually limit one another. The First Cause then, being limited by its effect, the world, cannot be infinite. Nor can it be absolute, for cause and effect being correlative terms, the cause "is as much conditioned by the effect as the effect by the cause."[1] The correctness of this inference is evident from this, that, since the argument passes from effect to cause, we are only justified in affirming the existence of the First Cause in so far as it is a cause, and not in any other respect.

How are these contradictions to be explained? A very brief examination serves to show that the whole difficulty arises from the nature of the principle of causation itself. The principle of causation can lead to nothing but an endless regress of cause and effect. Difficulty arises simply from the fact that the mind, demanding, as it must, some ultimate, endeavours forcibly to stop the movement of thought by supposing that one link in the chain is different in kind from all the other links. But since the principle of causation is the same in each instance of its application this endeavour leads inevitably to contradiction. Even in the very term *first cause* there is an inherent contradiction. A cause is a cause, only as a member in a relation. The word *first* represents an attempt to deny this of one cause, to make that one more than a cause, to make it absolute.

The principle of causation cannot, then, struggle as we may with it, lead us from the world to God. How, then, has the cosmological proof ever been found satisfactory? Its position in the history of thought cannot be explained if the argument is a mere verbal quibble. The truth is that the word *cause* is ambiguous. Sometimes it means the physical correlative of a physical event. Sometimes it is applied to the Ego, as when will is called a free cause. Now, as shown above, Spirit, or the Self, cannot be called a cause in the sense in which physical causes are so named. The physical cause and the physical

[1] Principal J. Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 138.

effect are mere correlatives. Both presuppose the self as the condition which makes them possible. The self, on the other hand, is no mere correlative. It is the condition presupposed in all experience. It is the basis of all relation. It is that which holds all the parts of experience together and makes one world. It is more even than the correlative of the whole cosmos of experience, for it transcends its own opposition to the cosmos, and includes both self and not-self in one apprehension. It is, then, quite inadmissible to class the self and its creature, the physical cause, together as both in the same sense causes.

Now the cosmological argument does this. It reasons from the world as a physical effect to its cause as a mere physical correlative. The whole value of the argument, however, consists in its enabling the mind to rise from the shifting scene of the world of experience to an ultimate which gives to that scene its possibility and reality. But this rise from the transitory to the eternal can never be accomplished by the movement from effect to cause. That movement can be but an endless regression of thought up the stream of time, while the effort to arrest the movement and posit a first cause can yield nothing but contradiction. The only way in which the desired end can be attained is by arguing, not from effect to cause, but from the whole succession, the whole changing scene of nature, to that which makes nature possible. The cosmological argument is, in fact, an effort to express the argument given in chapter ii., which reasons from that vast complex of relations called Nature to the Personal Being who makes possible all these relations as well as the whole system in which each relation forms an element. He is the true ultimate which gives reality to the whole changing scene of Nature. He is the true infinite, not in the sense of being infinite in space and time, but in the truer sense of making space and time and all that they contain possible. Space and time are in Him, not He in them. He is the true absolute, because as personal He is not the mere correlative of Nature, but, transcending His correlation with Nature, is relative only to Himself.[1]

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[1] Mr. Spencer, in his discussion of this question, fails altogether to

This argument, however, even when thus explained, is not altogether unobjectionable. There is more in the conclusion than can be found in the premises. In strict logic the premises should drive man to find the "First Cause" in his own Ego; for the argument rests on the vast assumption that Nature and the cosmos of experience are not identical. It assumes that the cosmos of experience is identical with only a part of Nature. It assumes that Nature existed before the individual thinker was born, and will exist after he is dead. Inevitable as this assumption is, it seems to be the one great logical blot upon the revised cosmological argument. Compared with it, the final step in the process of the argument—the conclusion, that is, that because Nature is, God is Personal—is plain and easy. For this conclusion is but a typical example of what must be the usual method of philosophical reasoning, the argument from a fact to its only possible explanation.

§ 2. The Teleological Proof.

The teleological proof is generally called the proof from final causes, or the proof from design. It infers a designing mind from the adaptation of means to ends in Nature. In its older form it dwelt upon the innumerable multitude of particular instances of adaptation which can be pointed out. The correspondences, for example, between the bodily structure of animals and plants and their physical environment; the adaptation of the organs of respiration to the properties of the atmosphere, of the eye to light, of size and strength to the forces of gravitation and cohesion. The list might be prolonged indefinitely. The great number of these instances, and the extreme complication of the means which are in some cases adapted, were supposed to prove conclusively the existence and operation of a designing mind. There can be no doubt that, while the old views of Nature prevailed, the argument amounted to a probable proof of great strength.

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apprehend this solution of the logical difficulties he parades so triumphantly. But this is perhaps not very surprising, seeing that Dean Mansel, from whose *Limits of Religious Thought* Mr. Spencer adopted his arguments, reasons on the supposition that subject and object are mere correlatives, like cause and effect. See *First Principles*, p. 40, quotation from Dean Mansel.

But the modern view, which traces organic forms to natural selection, has been supposed to modify, or even destroy, the value of this argument. If, out of an indefinitely great number of chance variations, only those survived which, in some way or other, rendered the organisms which possessed them more suited to their surroundings than other competing organisms, and so, in every case, the surviving variation is that which is suited to its circumstances, then the adaptation of means to ends seems to be due, not to intelligent foresight, but to chance. Purpose in Nature seems to be an illusion.

The first result of this difficulty is to drive thought back from particular instances of adaptation to the underlying laws and facts upon which the struggle for existence rests. Thus organic development rests upon the peculiar nature of living tissue whatever the peculiarity of that nature may consist in. Again, chemical processes of all kinds presuppose the atoms which, it has been shown, must be possessed of a highly complex constitution, seemingly of the most "artificial"[1] kind. Further, that the mechanism of Nature depends upon a primitive dynamical impulse is clearly implied by the law of the dissipation of energy. Purpose in Nature is then to be found, not in the adaptation of particular means to particular ends, but in the fact that the order of Nature presupposes some settled constitution in the original elements from which the process of Nature took its rise. This original constitution contained the potentiality of the whole process, and of the whole resulting order. We see thus, that, even if the particular breaks indicated above, the beginnings of motion and of life for example, were bridged, and it were proved that from the ether to the man all was one unbroken process of natural development, it would still be necessary to assume, in the primeval ether, some settled constitution, the germ and potentiality of the whole orderly series. If there is order in the process and in the result, there was order at the beginning. From utter disorder, if such a thing be supposed for the moment to be

[1] Sir J. Herschell compared atoms to "manufactured articles." See Professor Clerk Maxwell's article "Atom," in *Encyclopædia Brit.*, 9th Edition.

even thinkable, nothing but disorder could ever arise; for, if such disorder means anything, it means the doing at one moment of what is undone the next.

But does order imply purpose and therefore prove mind? May not the purposiveness of Nature be merely apparent, not real? "For all we know, it may only indicate our way of looking at things, and may point to no corresponding objective reality. That we are forced by the limited nature of our faculties to view Nature as working towards ends, as purposive, does not prove that it is really so."[1] Professor Bernard's answer to this objection seems conclusive. He shows "that precisely similar arguments might be urged against our affirmation of purpose, design, will, as the spring of the actions of other human beings." "We see that the external behaviour of other men is similar to our own, and that the most reasonable way of accounting for such behaviour is to suppose that they have minds like ourselves." But "neither on Kantian principles nor on any other can we *demonstrate* this; to cross the chasm which separates one man's personality from another's requires a venture of faith just as emphatically as any theological formula."[2]

When, in answer to this, it is objected that to argue from human mind to Divine mind is to argue from the well known to that of which experience has had no cognisance, it is well replied that "even when we infer the existence of another finite mind from certain observed operations, we are making an inference about something which is as mysterious an x as anything can be."[3] To reason from *self* to another self, to that which, as a self, can never even be thought, is to leave experience far behind.

Mind, or spirit, is then the only supposition which can be made to account for the order of Nature. Mind is, as respects order, a *vera causa*,[3] an admitted principle of explanation, and no other explanation is possible.

There is, however, one other consideration which claims our

[1] Kant's objection, as put by Professor Bernard in his Introduction to Kant's *Kritik of Judgment*, pp. xxxii., xxxiii., etc.

[2] *Ibid.* p. xxxiii. [3] *Ibid.* pp. xxxv., xxxvi.

attention here. The teleological proof deals only with the *order*, that is, the *form* of nature. It reasons from man to God. But man, when he acts the maker, simply gives form to a matter provided to his hand. The carpenter or the watch-maker deals with a material which is given to him. And so, when we infer the intelligent design of a human contriver, it is because we have found an artificial form impressed upon some natural material. The geologist, for instance, endeavours to prove the antiquity of man because a carved bone has been discovered in some particular stratum. But any worthy or satisfying conception of the Deity must regard Him as more than a great cosmic artificer who fashions a material already provided. The material itself must depend upon Him, or He is not truly God: He is not supreme in His universe. This is the great defect of the teleological argument proper. But it is, after all, to be questioned whether it can be counted a defect. For the Design argument never pretended to prove more than that the order which is visible in Nature must be referred to mind. The argument is a contribution to the whole proof upon which reasonable belief in the being of God rests: it is not itself the whole.

When the effort is made to complete the proof it is found that the teleological argument runs up into the cosmological; for the proof cannot be completed until we ascend from man as artificer to man as self. When this ascent is made, it is found that not merely the form of artificial things, but the whole of experience, both form and matter, is due to the self-determination of the subject. The necessity of correlation which connects every element in experience with every other element, and which forms the articulation of the whole system, is found to be the expression of freedom. All process is dominated by the idea of the end. Now, since experience is but Nature in part, natural processes, as a whole, are essentially the same in kind as those of them which are known in experience. Nature is the expression of freedom. The process of Nature is dominated by an end. Or, in other words, God is personal.

Here, as in the cosmological proof, the great assumption is the stride from experience to Nature; but this assumption, great as it is, is quite inevitable.

This new form of the cosmological proof which thus emerges is more complete than that which was previously given, because it corresponds to Will, while the form previously given corresponds to Knowledge, and Will represents spiritual activity more fully than Knowledge. As we saw above, this view yields the conception of an absolute good, the end to which the universe of Nature is relative.[1]

§ 3. The Ontological Proof.

The ontological proof reasons from the thought of God to His existence. In the form in which it was expressed by Anselm of Canterbury and others, it starts from the idea of God as that which must be thought absolutely perfect. Now if this perfect Being does not exist, it is possible to conceive another perfect being who does exist, and who is, therefore, more perfect. The thought of absolute perfection therefore involves existence.

Descartes' proof endeavours to avoid the paralogism so evident in Anselm's. The idea of the Supreme Being involves necessary existence. Existence is of His very essence. But whatever is of the essence of anything may be predicated of that thing. Existence may therefore be predicated of God. The argument assumes that there is an essential difference between the idea of God and all other ideas.

It is not surprising that reasonings such as these should have met with but scant courtesy at the hands of critics. To argue that, because an idea in the mind involves existence, therefore there must be a corresponding reality, seems the most glaring of fallacious inferences. As Kant put it, it might as well be argued that it is as good to have the idea of a hundred crowns in the mind as to have a hundred actual crowns in the purse.

But it is impossible to suppose that the argument conveyed no more than this to the minds of such men as Anselm and Descartes. It would be easy to show that neither of them deceived himself with a mere verbal quibble. There

[1] On the teleological proof, see Professor Bernard's Introduction to his translation of Kant's *Kritik of Judgment*. And, on the special question of the purposiveness implied in natural beauty, see Dr. Kennedy's Donnellan Lectures, *Natural Theology and Modern Thought*.

is a deeper truth involved. As Hegel urges, against Kant, "It is well to remember, when we speak of God, that we have an object of another kind than any hundred sovereigns, and unlike any one particular notion, representation, or however else it may be styled."[1] "It would be strange," he adds, "if the concrete totality we call God, were not rich enough to include so poor a category as being."[1]

Wherein, it may be asked, does the idea of God differ from other ideas? The answer to this question will be best understood by considering the case of the Ego. Things in space and time may be represented in thought by abstract ideas which are quite separate from the concrete things which they represent—so separate that the things may vanish and the ideas remain. We can think of snowballs in summer when the actual snowballs are no more. The subjective[2] and the objective are here separate, the one may exist without the other. But it is not so with the Ego. The idea of the Ego is inseparable from its existence, for the Ego is subject and object at the same time. The Ego involves the unity of thought and being. To think of an Ego is to be an Ego; or rather, to think at all is to be an Ego. The existence of the Ego is necessarily implied in all thought.

Now God is, in Hegel's words, "the concrete totality"—that is the true meaning of such terms as "absolutely perfect Being," "most real Being," "the Infinite," "the Absolute"—and it is impossible to think—not merely to think of such concrete totality, but to think at all—without assuming the ultimate unity of all things. We must assume an ultimate, or thought is impossible. But this ultimate must be *One*, or it would not be ultimate. It must also be a *concrete Unit* not an *abstract unity*, because it is all-inclusive. If not all-inclusive, it would be neither ultimate nor one, for whatever it failed to include would remain over against it as a second ultimate.

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[1] Hegel's *Logic*, pp. 108, 109 (Professor Wallace's translation).

[2] These words *subjective* and *objective* are about the most illusive in the language of philosophy. It must be remembered that the idea of the snowball is subjective as compared with the actual snowball, but objective as regards its relation with the Ego who thinks it.

The concrete totality includes, then, all reality, both subjective and objective. It involves, that is, the unity of thought and being. That this is no mere play upon words is evident from our common use of the word *universe* to represent that ultimate concrete whole which must be assumed to exist. No sane man will dare to argue that the universe may not exist because it is only known through thought. The fact is, that the argument of Anselm is implicitly contained in our confident assumption that the universe exists. This truth is only hidden from us because we thoughtlessly identify the universe with the world of things in space and time, failing altogether to see that the world in space and time cannot be the true universe for the simple reason that it is not all-inclusive. It does not include the Ego which space and time both presuppose.

The ontological argument is, then, an effort to give logical form to the reason for our belief in the ultimate concrete totality. The error involved is simply that effort. For the reason is no more a syllogism than is the famous *Cogito ergo sum*. But, it may be thought, the whole proof amounts merely to this identical proposition, all that exists exists, and must be thought of as all, or a whole. How is this a proof of the being of God? Some able writers have a short way out of this difficulty. Thought is "the *prius* of all things,"[1] but thought is essentially self-consciousness, therefore the ultimate concrete unit is a self-consciousness, a Person. "The true meaning of the ontological proof is this, as spiritual beings our whole conscious life is based on a universal self-consciousness, an Absolute Spiritual Life, which is not a mere subjective notion or conception, but which carries with it the proof of its necessary existence or reality."[2]

The great difficulty of this position was pointed out above. The ultimate unit must be a principle capable of unifying a multitude of persons. But self-consciousness contains no such capacity. It unifies the plurality of persons only by destroying their personality. Man is person because he is self-conscious,

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[1] J. Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 158.

[2] J. Caird, *op. cit.*, p. 159. Mr. Illingworth agrees with this. See his *Bampton Lectures*, p. 101.

because he is subject as well as object. Make him one in a multitude and he becomes mere object. We must believe in a multitude of persons, but we cannot think them as persons, as subjects: we can think them only as objects. It is not of any avail to argue that "we can not only think, but we can think the individual thinker." For when we think the individual thinker we do not think him as a thinker, but, only symbolically, as a thought. "We might even say," it is further argued, "that, strictly speaking, it is not we that think, but the universal reason that thinks in us. In other words, in thinking, we rise to a universal point of view, from which our individuality is of no more account than the individuality of any other object."[1] That is, the Ego in man is not man's self, but God's self. Man as a person is not man. So far as he is a person, he is God: a conclusion which must be called absurd. But it is not true to say that, in thinking, we rise to a universal point of view. If it were true we should be able to transcend our neighbours and penetrate the secrets of their inner life. In thinking we assume that there is a universal point of view, but that is a very different thing from being able to rise to it. As already admitted, this assumption must be made in terms which seem to imply the possibility of rising to the universal point of view, for, self being ultimate for itself, we have no other terms to use.

It is now plain that the truth expressed by the ontological argument is exactly the conclusion at which we arrived in chapter v. God is the ultimate concrete totality. But this does not mean that He is a mere name for "the all." It means that He contains a principle which transcends the unity of personality and so gives concrete unity to the otherwise discrete multiplicity of the spiritual world.

The value of this conclusion is so great that, without it, we should be driven to universal scepticism. Both speculatively and practically it is fundamental. We have here specially to do with its practical value. The cosmological and teleological proofs taught us to believe in God as personal. As personal, God wills the good, or, in other words, Nature is relative to

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[1] J. Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 158.

an end. But on what principle can we be assured that what is good for God is good for man? Why may not the end which God has in view be independent of, or antagonistic to, the end which would realise man? The answer is given by the ontological argument. God is not mere person. He is also more than person, He is the principle which unifies all persons. Hence the Good which God has in view must be one with the good of man. In other words, God is good.

II

ON THE IDEA OF ORGANIC UNITY AS APPLIED TO SOCIETY

§ 1. The Organic View.

It is a commonplace of modern ethical writing to contrast the old so-called atomistic view of the individual in his relation to society with the modern organic view which has been popularised by the efforts of evolutionary writers. "Society," says Mr. Leslie Stephen, "is not a mere aggregate but an organic growth; it forms a whole, the laws of whose growth can be studied apart from those of the individual atom."[1] "It is as true that man is dependent upon his fellows as that a limb is dependent upon the body. It would be as absurd to ask what would be the properties of a man who was not a product of the race, as to ask what would be the properties of a leg not belonging to an animal; or to ask what would be the best type of man without considering his place in society, as to ask what would be the best kind of leg without asking whether it belonged to a hare or a tortoise."[2] "It is therefore necessary to speak of society as an organism or organic growth which has, in some sense, a life of its own."[3] The name *social organism* "marks the essential fact, that although at any time the properties of the constituted whole are the product of the constituting units, those units have gained their properties in virtue of belonging

[1] *Science of Ethics*, p. 31. [2] *Ibid.* p. 111.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 112.

to this whole."[1] Mr. Stephen, however, prefers the term "social tissue" to "social organism," because, though continuous, the race has not the unity of the higher organisms.[1] The whole human race forms "a continuous organic growth."[1]

Mr. Muirhead adopts this conception from evolutionary ethics, and, while hinting at the possibility of a higher justification, makes it the foundation of the doctrine of community. "Evolutionist writers," he says, "have helped to bring home the truth that the *Self*, whose satisfaction upon these theories is in one form or another the end, is an abstraction. No attempt to define it in terms of its individual nature as only accidentally related to society can henceforth succeed."[2] Again, "It was a favourite metaphor with the older individualistic writers to liken the soul of the newly-born child to a piece of blank paper, on which, by means of education, anything might be written, and so a perfectly independent and original character given to the individual. It would be a more apt illustration of its true nature to compare it to a word or sentence in a continuous narrative."[3] Once more, "The individual is not less vitally related to society than the hand or the foot to the body. Nor is it merely that each individual is dependent for life and protection upon society, as the hand or the foot is dependent for its nourishment upon the body, but he is dependent on his relation to society for the particular form of his individuality. It is the function it performs in virtue of its special place in the organism which makes the hand a hand, and the foot a foot. In the same way, it is his place and function in society which makes the individual what he is."[4]

§ 2. The Organic View of the Self.

It might seem that the doctrine of community as expounded in chapter v. might have been made clearer and more easy of apprehension, if it had been justified by considerations such as these, instead of those which were there adduced, by scientific as opposed to metaphysical reasonings. The method might have been easy, but it would have been misleading. For,

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[1] *Science of Ethics*, pp. 120, 123, 126.

[2] Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, p. 134. See also Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, essay v. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 155, 156. [4] *Ibid.* p. 162.

valuable as all these considerations are from the scientific point of view, by themselves they cannot yield a true conception of the individual self. They lead at once to the result, indicated with approval by Mr. Muirhead, that the individual self is an abstraction. The individual, if this view be correct, owes his very being, his very essence, to the position which he occupies as a member in society. His unity is the reflection of the unity of the whole. But has society, as a whole, any unity properly so-called ? Mr. Stephen is so convinced of the contrary that he has to drop the term *social organism* and adopt the term *social tissue* instead. Society as a whole, he admits, has not such unity as is possessed by the higher organisms. Its unity is like that of one of the lower organisms, mere continuity of tissue, a unity so little organic that large portions of the tissue might be cut away and yet the whole remain as capable as ever of exercising its functions. It is impossible to see how the *self* of a man, the most definite unit which thought is able to conceive, can possess its unity by relation with this amorphous mass of tissue.

§ 3. Society and Nature.

Further, it is to be noted that from the scientific point of view the individual owes his individuality, not merely to the relation in which he stands to society, but also to the relation in which he stands to nature. His position in nature is part of his individuality just as much as his position in society. Why not, then, extend the conception of the organism and speak of the *natural* organism instead of the *social* organism ? There is no doubt whatever that domestic animals occupy an important position with regard to society ; why should not they be included ? Wild animals also depend for their distribution, habits, very existence, on the condition of human society ; why not include them ? So again, plant-life, natural scenery, even climate, vary concomitantly with man. Further consideration seems to show that the natural organism has a true organic unity. It is no mere amorphous mass of tissue. Every individual, human or other than human, would be accurately defined as an individual if all nature but it were defined. The unity of the individual seems to be, in strict accuracy, the reflection of the unity of the whole. The natural organism is surely the true unit.

But this merely suffices to lead us back to what we saw long ago, that nature is an organic whole. We have treated man as a part of nature, and so given him a position in that organic whole. But man, in his true character, is not a part of nature. As *self* he belongs to a higher world, for his experience, that is, nature so far as it exists for him, presupposes his *ego* in every element as well as in the whole.

It would be impossible to attempt to show here how the imperfect scientific treatment of man as a part of nature takes its place in that truer treatment of him which regards him as belonging to a world higher than nature. That is a great subject, and the effort to grapple with it would occupy space which is not at our disposal. But it is not necessary to grapple with it in order to be convinced that man, as self, is not a part of nature. For there would be no nature for man to know, if, as knowing subject, man were not logically prior to his experience.

§ 4. Is it, then, inadmissible to apply the idea of Organic Unity to Society?

Is it, then, inadmissible to apply the idea of organic unity to society? The only answer which can be given to this question is, that there is no other idea which can be applied to represent the truth of the case, but at the same time that truth is not fully represented by that idea. The doctrine of community as explained in chapter v. is an application of the idea of organic unity to the whole multitude of persons. But, as there stated, the application is symbolical; for when the multitude of persons is regarded as forming an organic whole in God, the mind of the thinker who so regards it endeavours to adopt the Divine point of view, and to subordinate all other persons to his own thought. But he can never accomplish this. By no effort of thought can he rise superior to the barrier which shuts him as thinking subject out from his neighbours as thinking subjects. But, as already explained, it is absolutely necessary to believe that there is in God a principle of unity superior to that of personality; and the only form which this belief can take in thought is an application of the idea of organic unity to the whole multitude of personal beings.

PART II

OUTLINE OF ETHICAL THEORY

CHAPTER I

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

THERE are two different classes of terms which are commonly used to express moral distinctions. Conduct may be spoken of as *right* or *wrong*, or as *good* or *bad*.

§ 1. The Right.

The term *right* has never lost the force which it derived from its origin in the Latin *rectus*. It still carries with it the idea of *conformity with rule*. It implies *estimation by reference to law*. With the term *right* are connected several other terms which involve the same idea: *Duty* or that which is due, whatever a man is bound by law to perform; *Ought*, a term allied with *duty*, expressive of indebtedness; *Obligation*, expressive of the bondage in which law involves those who are subject to it; *Responsibility* or accountableness, the state of being liable to be called to give account of conduct before some supreme authority representing the law.

§ 2. The Good.

The term *good* expresses estimation by reference to an *end*. This is evident from the fact that the word *good* marks, sometimes the quality of conduct, sometimes the end which the conduct has in view. To be a peacemaker is to do good, to perform a good act. The peace which is the end of the action of peace-making is, in itself, said to be good, or to be "a good thing," or simply "a good."

Cognate with *good* is the term *Virtue*, signifying the quality of character which corresponds to the performance of good conduct, the fitness of a man to attain the end.

§ 3. Which Conception is Fundamental?

It is necessary to inquire which of these two conceptions of the nature of morality—the conception of *right* or conformity with law, and the conception of *good* or value for an end—is of prior importance. There is no doubt that the former seems to enter more than the latter into language, and into the customs of society. It has a larger vocabulary, and provides most of the standards by which conduct is commonly judged. Its connexion with religion and social institutions seems more obvious. It has a greater hold on tradition; because, in point of time, the earliest idea of morality seems to be the idea of obedience to a law imposed from without and enforced under penalty. The child learns to submit to parental authority, the uncivilised man receives his ethical training under the discipline of the king and the priest. In both cases the idea of law is supreme. But, in spite of all this, the conception of conformity with law is not the fundamental conception of morality; for the unit of conduct is the concrete act, and of it no law or code of laws can be the measure. As a matter of fact, every act differs in some of its circumstances from every other act. The act is concrete and individual. The law, on the other hand, is abstract and general. The law can therefore measure the act in certain respects only, and not in all respects. It corresponds, not to the whole of the act, only to a part of it. Consequently the law can never be a perfect means of estimating conduct. The history of law affords a remarkable verification of this view.

It is plain *à priori* that laws must conflict sometimes. Law is abstract. No law can cover all the circumstances of any concrete case. Cases are, then, sure to occur in which one law covers some of the circumstances, another law covers others of them. And what is thus evident *à priori* is known to occur as a matter of fact in a multitude of instances. The application of the moral code to life gave rise to so many cases of conflict that the effort to provide for them led to the creation of Casuistry, a complicated system of laws for the breaking of laws, a system which, whatever its value, could never be a complete system on account of the indefinite variety of circumstances. In like manner, the difficulties arising from the attempt to apply civil law to life have led to the vast and complicated legal machinery which exists in all civilised countries. It is therefore evident that no code of laws can be the ultimate moral standard, and that the idea of *the right*, or that which conforms with law, cannot be the fundamental ethical conception.

And, indeed, it is not possible for the mind, when engaged in considering any *normative* science, to rest content with arriving at rules or laws. The very nature of the science implies that the law is only valuable as a rule in accordance with which a certain end may be attained. The law exists for the end, and therefore the end, and not the law, is fundamental. The fundamental ethical conception is, then, *the good*, that which estimates the quality of conduct by reference to its end. And this is the true measure of the concrete act, for a very brief examination reveals the fact that the character of every act depends upon the end to which it is relative. Conduct is, as we saw, best defined to be voluntary action;

and voluntary action is essentially action controlled by motives.[1] But the motive is the end idealised; it is the idea of the end in which the Agent, in performing the action, seeks self-satisfaction. Thus the act receives its character from the end to which it is relative.

§ 4. Motive.

The analysis of the motive has been already given.[2] It is well, however, to remember that the word motive is used in other senses. Properly, the motive means that which *moves* to action; and so that mental situation out of which the action really takes its rise has been selected and defined as the motive.[3] This is the only way in which the term *motive* can be consistently and usefully employed. If all the desires of which a man may happen to be conscious when he is deliberating upon an act of will are to be called motives, then the word loses its value and, what is worse, becomes a means of confusion; for there is no word left to define that final and unique situation which is not desire at all, and is yet more important than any mere desire, because it is the determinant of action. It is well, however, to be aware that all the contending desires are called motives by some writers. Sometimes a mere feeling is called the motive. It is said that a man's motive in performing some act was love or fear or anger. Such a mode of speech may be admissible in ordinary colloquial language, but is quite improper in the serious study of Ethics. Mere feeling cannot be the determinant of any act which can be called conduct. An element of feeling enters into every motive,[4] but it is most incorrect to separate

[1] See part i. chap. iii. § 10.

[2] Part i. chap. iii. §§ 7, 8.

[3] As by Green. See his *Prolegomena*, bk. ii. ch. i.

[4] See part i. chap. iii. § 7.

a subordinate element from the whole, and dignify it with a name which properly belongs to the whole.[1]

§ 5. Motive and Intention.

The term *Intention* is of interest chiefly because it marked the centre of a disputation between the Utilitarians and their opponents. For this reason it is better to avoid it. It is fertile in ambiguities. Utilitarians put it in opposition to the motive. Mill adopts the position that "the motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action though much with the worth of the agent."[2] "The morality of the action," he adds, "depends entirely upon the intention—that is, upon what the agent wills to do. But the motive, that is, the feeling which makes him will so to do, when it makes no difference in the act, makes none in the morality."[3]

Here the motive is reduced to mere feeling; the intention is practically identified with the true motive, that is, with the true determinant of conduct; and the worth of the agent is implicitly made to depend upon his feelings, and not upon his habits of action. This last is a most serious error.[4] The reduction of the motive to mere feeling, though it may seem a mere question of words, creates, as we have seen, a confusion of thought which cannot but lead to misconception. And even the intention, though practically identified with the true motive, is apparently conceived in an erroneous manner. It is what the agent wills to do. But, with Mill, what the agent wills to do seems to have been conceived as a mere external result and not as the act itself. "Mill's error seems to arise from

[1] See Muirhead, *Elements of Ethics*, p. 56; and Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*, p. 37.

[2] *Utilitarianism*, p. 26.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 27, note.

[4] Mill makes this same separation of character and conduct on p. 29.

this, that he supposes the moral judgment to be passed on things done, whereas the moral judgment is not properly passed upon a *thing done*, but upon a *person doing*."[1] If the intention were simply identified with the motive, the motive being the idea of the end in which the agent seeks satisfaction, all difficulty would cease. The only objection to this usage is that the term intention is customarily employed in a wider sense than it is convenient to give to the term motive. The intention seems to include all the foreseen consequences of the act, the motive only those consequences which, in idea, form the end with which the agent identifies himself. The agent may be well aware that his action will entail certain consequences to which he is indifferent, or which he may even dislike. Such consequences cannot be said to be unintentional, yet they are not any part of the motive. The idea of them does not move him to action.[2]

§ 6. Motive and Consequences.

The connexion between the motive and the consequences of the act is now sufficiently plain. Apart from the conscious anticipation of them by the agent, the con-

[1] Mackenzie, *op. cit.* p. 53. This criticism is due to Mr. Mackenzie.

[2] See Mackenzie, *op. cit.* ch. iii. for an interesting account of this question. There is an underlying difficulty. If the morality of an act lies in the motive, how is it that a man is held responsible for those intentional consequences which did not enter into his real motive? The answer seems to be that, as with some other ethical puzzles, the difficulty arises from the effort to express the concrete in terms of the abstract. As will be more evident later on, *the good* is always individual. Every set of circumstances which furnishes an occasion for action has its good which is peculiar and unique. There is, in every case, but one motive which can be regarded with ethical approval, and that motive is the idea of the end which, under the circumstances, is the best. No rivalry between motive and intention is possible, though there may be dispute as to what is the one motive.

sequences of the act have nothing to do with its morality; and in the consequences, regarded as mere events separate from the act, there is no ethical element whatever. The unit of conduct, it must never be forgotten, is the concrete act. Morality is a quality of action. The consequences of an act, then, influence its morality only in so far as they form the end which the agent consciously sets before him. It follows that it is a great mistake to oppose the motive to the consequences, as has been very frequently done. The motive is the preconception of the consequences, in so far as their preconception moves to action. Consequences which are not preconceived have nothing to do with morality.[1]

§ 7. Will and Desire.

The relation between Will and Desire has already been touched upon.[2] But it is well to make, in this place, a brief statement which may enable the student to keep the leading ideas well in view. Conduct always has reference to some desire. Desire is not mere want, nor is it the mere feeling of want. Desire is the want and the feeling of the want as they exist for the consciousness of a thinking self. Hence it is a mistake to speak of the mind as if it were simply a field in which a multitude of desires contend for the mastery, as if the desire were the active principle, the mind a passive subject. It is the activity of the mind which gives desire, in so far as it is an element in conduct, all the existence and potency which it possesses. It is only when the thinking self recognises the want as *his* want, that desire exists at all for the man as man. Desire is, in fact, the man desiring.

[1] See Muirhead, *op. cit.* bk. ii. chap. i.; and Dewey, *Outlines of Ethics*, pp. 7, 8.

[2] See part i. chap. iii. § 7.

Again, desire is relative to an object, for every want is the want of something. In desiring the man presupposes the possibility of an object which will satisfy the want of which he is conscious. But this object, again, is not a thing which can have any existence apart from the activity of the self, for the true object of human desire is not a mere thing, a mere object. The true object of human desire is the act of satisfaction,[1] the desire attaining its end. But this act of satisfaction is, in the case of mere desire, altogether an ideal thing. It exists only in the imagination of the thinking self.

It is only then in a metaphorical sense that man can be said to be the slave or the victim of desire. So far as expressions of this kind can express the truth, it may be said that the man has enslaved or victimised himself.

Desire is the man's determination[2] of his own possibilities. The relation between Desire and Will is the relation between the potential and the actual. In desire the object is altogether ideal. The act of satisfaction

[1] Hedonists maintain that pleasure is the end of desire. For the fallacy of this doctrine see part iii. chap. ii.

[2] The word determination here implies the exercise of will. But, as will presupposes desire, this may seem illogical. The fact is that there is an unavoidable circle involved in any analysis of spiritual activity. Knowledge, Desire, and Will mutually presuppose one another. Knowledge presupposes desire and will in the act of attention. Desire presupposes knowledge in the idea of the object, and will in the act of attention which gives the desire its place in consciousness. Will presupposes knowledge in the idea of the end, and desire in the possibility of the end. This is not at all surprising; for knowledge, desire, and will are but moments or stages in the one concrete activity. Each by itself is an abstraction.

These considerations show clearly that the self which desires is not the so-called empirical self. See Mr. Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*, p. 148; see also part i. chap. i. § 9, note.

exists only for the imagination. As yet it has no real existence except as an idea. In Will, on the other hand, the object, that is, the act of satisfaction, is adopted by the man as the end with which he identifies himself. He chooses it as his good. He exercises his power. The potential becomes actual. Thus, in desire, the man determines his possibilities, in will, he determines himself. Will is the growing-point of that self-evolution which is of the very essence of the human spirit. But the man grows, not as a material organism, but as a spirit, by the perpetual exercise of his own self-determining activity. The act of will is at once self-determination and self-expression.

§ 8. Character and Conduct.

While considering the Will we were led incidentally to the conclusion that it is impossible to separate character and conduct. Conduct is due to the reaction of character upon circumstances. But this statement does not mean that conduct is necessary, for the character is, as we saw, another name for the man as he has determined himself to be.[1] Just as Reason, Will, Desire, are not to be taken for separate entities, but are simply names for the man reasoning, willing, desiring; so character is not a form impressed upon the man from without. Character is one aspect of the man himself. Again, character is not to be regarded as stationary. It changes with every volition. It receives a new form from every fresh act of self-determination. Thus the volition is the outward expression of what the man at the moment really is. It is his self-expression, as well as his self-

[1] It is not meant here that this self-development does not take place within limits. In chapter v. it was shown that spirit must limit spirit, though the mode of its limitation cannot be thought. Hereditary predisposition seems a case in point. The meaning here is that *natural* necessity cannot limit spirit.

determination. Conduct is therefore the manifestation of character. This explains a multitude of ethical phenomena. As the manifestation of character, conduct attracts to itself an intensity of regard which would otherwise be impossible. The abhorrence with which a great crime is regarded is not simply directed against the isolated action, but against the character which the action reveals. The admiration excited by a heroic deed is not stirred by the thought of the one event, but by the fact that the event gives an insight into a noble character. So also reward is bestowed and punishment inflicted because action reveals character. This way of viewing conduct serves to emphasise its personal nature. Conduct is not conduct except as the action of a person. But when it is viewed from the side of character the presence of personality is more distinctly obvious, and that intensity of regard just mentioned is explained.

But this view of character may not seem to be quite in accordance with fact. Does not character mean a certain set of dispositions, hereditary and acquired? It would be impossible to enter here into the difficult question as to the existence, or even possibility, of hereditary dispositions. Can there be dispositions which are not due to the formation of habits? It is a hard question to answer, but it need not detain us; for a disposition does not necessarily produce conduct. A disposition means that the man has certain possibilities or impossibilities of self-realisation which otherwise he would not possess. We saw, in our consideration of Will and Desire, that desire is the man's consciousness of his own possibilities. Now, every disposition, whether it be hereditary or acquired, implies corresponding desires. But it does not imply corresponding volitions. There is a very important step to be taken before the

possibility becomes an actuality. There is the act of will. And so character, in the sense in which it manifests itself in conduct, is not a mere set of dispositions. Character is the man, as possessing the dispositions and yielding to them or not according to the way in which he exerts his power of self-determination. To make character a set of dispositions which inevitably assert themselves whenever circumstances are favourable is, in another form, precisely the mistake of those who regard the mind as a field upon which a crowd of desires strive for the mastery. At the same time, a man's dispositions contribute largely to the production of conduct, for they set limits to his possibilities. He cannot act apart from all desire, and desires, to a great extent, result from dispositions. But character is to be found, not in what a man can be, but in what he is, that is, in his activity as a self-determining agent. Thus the man, whether he follows the bent of any disposition, or determines himself to do what seems to him to be the good in spite of that disposition, is, in his conduct, expressing himself. Character, as well as conduct, is then subject to ethical approval or disapproval.

Early in this chapter attention was directed to the fact that the act derives its quality from its end. For, as was pointed out, the motive, the idea of the end, embodies all that is characteristic of the act. There is reason, consequently, in the common opinion that the morality of any act depends upon its motive. But the motive is the idea of the end in which the self finds satisfaction; the end, that is, with which the man identifies himself, which he chooses as his good, in which he sees his own realisation. Thus the motive also represents the character of the agent.

§ 9. The Good Will.

We see now that goodness may be predicated of the character, of the motive, and of the act. But these three are really stages in the one process of self-determination. Of this process it is, then, that moral goodness or moral badness may be most properly predicated. This seems to be the truth of Kant's dictum that there is nothing good in itself but the good will.

§ 10. The End.

What is the nature of the End to which any act is relative? In considering Desire, we saw that the object of desire is not a mere *thing:* the true object is the act of satisfaction. Now so it is with the End of conduct. When any desire is adopted by the man as that in the satisfaction of which he finds his realisation, the object of the desire becomes the end of the act. And so the end of any act is not a mere object or thing. The end is the act itself. It is the doing of the act which gives satisfaction. It is the exercise of a fitting activity which constitutes the realisation of self, the attainment of the end. Of course, this does not mean that there is no external thing or object involved in the satisfaction. The meaning is that such a thing cannot in itself be the end to which an act is relative. If any external thing or object is involved, then the end is that thing enjoyed by the self as an object of interest. The end must be, not mere self or mere object, but self and object in conjunction; in other words, activity.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF ETHICS

§ 1. First Question.

WE have now advanced far enough to enter upon the main inquiry of ethical science. Let us, then, repeat the question which we asked at the beginning, What is meant by saying one act is *good*, another *bad;* one *ought to be done*, another *ought not to be done?*

§ 2. Formal Account of Volition.

The morality of an act, we have seen, resides in the Will, that is, in the man willing. In attempting to answer this question, it is therefore necessary to consider volition.

Our whole study of the Will has yielded this result: volition is the act of a self-conscious subject directing himself to his own satisfaction. In volition man is an end to himself and must be. "Self-satisfaction is the form of every object willed."[1] In all conduct man seeks self-satisfaction as *the good*. *The good* simply means that which satisfies self. The object of the will is always *the good*, or *what is conceived as the good.*

If, then, in all conduct, man seeks for self-satisfaction as the good, how can there be moral distinction? What is the difference between a good action and a bad action?

§ 3. Possibility of a Criterion.

The question as to the possibility of finding some means of distinction between acts can never be answered so long

[1] Green, *op. cit.* p. 161.

as attention is given exclusively to the formal side of willing. The criterion must be sought, if it is to be found at all, in the nature of the objects willed. Acts must be distinguished, that is, by reference to their ends.

Since the idea of the end is the motive of action, this way of arriving at a criterion agrees with the common opinion that the morality of the act depends upon the motive. It is also to be remembered that the objects willed are not mere things. The true object is the activity, the thing and the agent in conjunction. The object, for instance, in which the agent in the act of eating seeks satisfaction is not mere food, but the act of eating the food. Again, the object of action must be first an object of desire. No object can become an object of will which does not satisfy some desire or interest. Desire makes the end possible, will makes it actual.

It is this distinction between the end as only desired and the end as willed which shows that there can be a criterion of the quality of conduct. Man is the subject of a multitude of desires and interests which all correspond to possible ends. The man can choose his good by identifying himself with any of these possible ends, so making it actual. He can adopt as his end the end of every desire as it arises, if he elect so to do. But this is not the way to real satisfaction. The gratification of each desire as it arises, is sure to lead to disappointment. The end adopted as the good proves unsatisfying. It is not the true good. And the man reflects that if he had denied himself the satisfaction of that desire and identified himself with the end of some other desire he would, so far as he can see, have obtained a real satisfaction, a satisfaction which would not have passed with the momentary gratification.

§ 4. The Problem of Ethics.

What is needed is a principle for the ordering of the desires; so that, guided by the principle, the man may in each case identify himself with that object which shall afford a real satisfaction. The true satisfaction of self demands two things:—

(1) The satisfaction of some desire or interest.

(2) This satisfaction taking place according to some principle of selection.

The problem of Ethics is, To find this principle.

§ 5. Illustrations from the History of Ethics.

Although the problem of Ethics has not always been stated in this way, an examination of the efforts which have been made to form an ethical theory is sufficient to show that the discovery of a principle for the ordering of the desires is the end which moral philosophers have always aimed at.

Aristotle's doctrine of virtue as the mean between two extremes seems to be an application to conduct and character of that most characteristic of Greek principles, "Nothing in excess." Virtue, with Aristotle, is the habit of choosing the mean. Quite apart from the value or interest of this doctrine, it is plain that it is, as applied to the determination of conduct, simply a principle for the ordering of the desires. Every desire which would lead a man to do anything which would be, for him, an extravagance by excess or defect is to be denied. Only those desires are to be gratified which will make the man's life a shapely and harmonious whole.

So also with the ordinary doctrine of Conscience. Every man is supposed to possess, as part of his mental constitution, a faculty which provides a ready-made principle for the ordering of the Desires as they arise. Any desire which would, if gratified, conflict with the *dicta* of conscience is

to be suppressed. Those desires only are to be gratified which are either approved by conscience or, at least, not disapproved.

With this view of the problem of Ethics, the Hedonist and the Utilitarian also agree. The Hedonist condemns to disappointment all desires which do not ultimately yield the greatest possible amount of pleasure or relief from pain. The Utilitarian forbids the satisfaction of all desires which would interfere with the production of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

It is not too much, then, to say that the view of the problem of Ethics which is here presented is, implicitly at all events, sanctioned by ethical philosophers of every school.

It is in the answer to the question that thinkers differ.

§ 6. Another Statement of the Problem of Ethics.

The problem of Ethics may be expressed, with some profit, in a slightly different fashion. We have seen that man, as the subject of certain desires and interests, has a certain range of possibilites open to him. He is like a merchant starting in business with so much capital. And the question which rises to the mind of the thinking man who understands his situation, is precisely that which occupies the thoughts of the merchant: How to lay out his resources to best advantage? Among all the many lines of choice which are possible for the man, there must be one which is best, and the question is, How to find it?

Or, to put the matter in other words, every man has a certain range of capacity, he is capable of development in many different ways according to the desires and interests that he selects for gratification. He is aware that if he chooses certain lines of action he must leave certain other lines unchosen, and so may miss that line which will afford

to his character and in his circumstances the truest and best development of which he is capable. The question of his life must be, How to choose so as to realise his capabilities in the best manner? Or, shortly, How to realise himself? For the best realisation of his capabilities is simply the full realisation of what he has it in him to be.

Again, since in realising his capabilities by reaction upon his circumstances in the best manner, the man is exerting his activity in what must be regarded as the way which specially corresponds to his own individuality, the problem of Ethics may be stated thus: Wanted a principle to guide each man in the exercise of his proper Function. And the End of conduct may be defined to be Self-realisation, or the full exercise of the man's faculties in accordance with his proper individuality.[1]

It seems better to define the End as self-realisation, than as self-satisfaction. The term *satisfaction* seems to correspond more especially to Desire than to Will. Will is self-determination, and its end may be more fittingly described by a term which suggests rather the actualising of a possibility than the filling of a want.

§ 7. Can the End be fully defined?

Although we have only succeeded so far in expressing our wants, yet the mere statement of the problem throws some light on what may be expected of a theory of Ethics. The End, we now know, is self-realisation, and the principle we are in search of must provide a means for the subordination of the desires, as they arise, to this end. If, then, the end could receive more than a formal definition we should be on the way to the discovery of the principle. But a little thought will prove that the end is incapable of a material definition. The *content* of the end cannot be

[1] This is practically Aristotle's view.

defined, because self-realisation must be, for every man, peculiar and unique. The content must be different in every case. It must be perfectly individual.[1] Every man has his own individual life to live, and his own proper place to fill, and, as pointed out above, no abstract statement can define the concrete. And even in the case of any selected individual it would be impossible to give a detailed account of the end which would constitute his self-realisation, for it is impossible to say beforehand what any self has it in him to be.

§ 8. Does any Principle exist?

The question may here be raised: If the end is essentially incapable of a full definition, why should such a principle as that which is demanded by the study of Ethics exist at all? May not the quest be illusive? It may seem to some that the extreme complication of the phenomena, and the great disagreement between the different schools of ethical thought, point to the conclusion that, in the study of conduct, it is impossible to arrive at any scientific result. Every man, it may seem, must do the best he can according to the opinions he is able to form from his own experience, and give up all hope of arriving at any settled convictions as to the existence of an absolute standard or general principle of any kind.

Misgivings such as these are likely to occur to many. They are in accordance with current modes of thought, and suit the mind in its moments of weariness or gloom. But they cannot be permanent, for man is an end to himself. From the very fact that he is a Self or Person, he must believe in a Best which he has it in him to be. He cannot but stamp the unity of his own nature upon the possibilities of his life, and reach out towards a supreme

[1] See Dewey, *op. cit.* p. 102.

End as the goal of his activities. Conscious Will must believe in the Good and seek it.

It is this "self-objectifying consciousness" which yields the great idea of an "unconditional good," an absolutely desirable end, and forms the quickening soul of practical morality as well as of philosophical Ethics.

CHAPTER III

DETERMINATION OF THE PRINCIPLE

§ 1. Self-love and Benevolence.

READERS of Bishop Butler's ethical writings will probably remember having experienced some perplexity in the effort to reconcile the doctrines of the famous sermons preached in the Rolls Chapel with the teaching of the *Dissertation on Virtue*. In the sermons on Human Nature, "Reasonable Self-love" and Conscience seem to be exalted to positions of equal and co-ordinate authority, Benevolence, though first put upon an apparently equal footing with Self-love, being afterwards degraded to a somewhat indefinite position of inferiority.

In the sermons on "The Love of our Neighbour," Benevolence seems first to be regarded as one of "the particular common affections," and to be justified on the ground that, like every other particular affection, it is "subservient to Self-love by being the instrument of private enjoyment"; and finally exalted as the supreme principle of virtue, so that "the common virtues, and the common vices of mankind, may be traced up to benevolence or the want of it," and that, "leaving out the particular nature of creatures, and the particular circumstances in which they are placed, benevolence seems, in the strictest sense, to include in it all that is good and worthy."

Lastly, in the *Dissertation on Virtue*, Bishop Butler most distinctly attributes the supreme position to Conscience, even reasonable Self-love, under the name of Prudence, being justified on the ground that Conscience approves of it. The supremacy of Conscience is, no doubt, the final word of Butler's ethical system.

The difficulty which thus comes to light is perhaps the greatest difficulty in the way of the formation of a theory of Ethics. How can regard for self and regard for others be justified and reconciled? Selfishness sums up immorality, yet self-satisfaction is the end of every act. Man cannot but identify himself with the end of his conduct, how then can regard for others be anything but an indirect regard for self? How can unselfishness be justified except by reducing it to selfishness? But, even apart from this general difficulty, there is the special difficulty as to how to draw the line between acts which seem purely self-regarding, and those which, however they may be ultimately justified, have for their immediate object the benefiting of others. On what principle is distinction to be made between those cases in which self finds its satisfaction in the attainment of a private end, and those in which self-satisfaction is to be reached through regard to the welfare of others? When is the self-regarding end to be chosen, and when is the other-regarding end to be preferred? However proof may be piled upon proof to show that reasonable self-love and benevolence are not inconsistent, the question must sometimes arise as to what is reasonable and what is unreasonable self-love. Of course, Bishop Butler, by calling in the aid of conscience, disposed of the difficulty in his own most reasonable manner; but, by so doing, he reduced both self-love and benevolence to the position of subordinate affections.

If conscience has to be called in to decide when one, and when the other, of these two affections is to prevail, then these affections cease to have any value for purposes of moral estimation. They may be permitted to have their way only in so far as they submit to the dictation of conscience.[1]

§ 2. Egoism and Altruism.

The same difficulty reappears in recent ethical literature. Mr. Spencer opposes Egoism (self-regard) to Altruism (other-regard). He looks upon life as a field whereon these two opposing forces strive for the mastery; he shows, at considerable length, that undue egoism and undue altruism both fail to attain their ends; and concludes that it is necessary to effect a compromise. The compromise, however, amounts only to this, that "general happiness is to be achieved mainly through the adequate pursuit of their own happiness by individuals; while, reciprocally, the happinesses of individuals are to be achieved in part by their pursuit of the general happiness."[2] But this compromise solves neither the general difficulty as to how the pursuit of self-satisfaction can be ever properly described as altruism, nor the special difficulty as to when self-satisfaction is to be found in a private end, and when in the welfare of others. It provides no means of ethical judgment. Nor does Mr. Spencer's confidence that, as Evolution proceeds, private and general ends will be more and more identified, assist at all to the solution of these problems.

[1] The careful student of Bishop Butler's great sermons will, of course, perceive at once that the criticism given above is not so much a criticism of Bishop Butler as of the perplexities of the modern reader. Bishop Butler was greatly influenced by the Stoic idea of virtue as a following of Nature. Hence his effort to determine the proportionate value of the several active principles. He was not so much concerned to form a system as to find out what man is intended for.

[2] *Data of Ethics*, p. 238.

§ 3. Self-love.

It is necessary, first of all, to recur to the fact, already insisted on, that the end of conduct must be self-satisfaction. The distinction between selfishness and unselfishness must, then, depend upon a distinction in the objects in which the man finds his self-satisfaction. The man who, in gratifying his various desires, identifies his personal satisfaction with the satisfaction of others is an unselfish man. The man who finds his personal satisfaction in the ends of his various desires, regardless of the satisfaction of others, is a selfish man. Self-love is therefore rather a misleading term. It may be merely a name for the formal side of all volition. In this sense every action may be said to be an exercise of self-love. Or it may be a name for one particular view of virtuous conduct, when such conduct is regarded as the *true* satisfaction of self. So it is that self-love is appealed to when the way of virtue is shown to be also the way of happiness. Or, lastly, self-love may mean simply selfishness, the character which gratifies desire irrespective of the welfare of others.

These ambiguities seem to show that it is impossible to find any guiding principle in the idea of self-love.[1] For, in the first sense, every action without distinction is due to self-love; in the second sense, the man who is guided by self-love, in that he seeks the good because it is his true satisfaction, is still without any criterion by which to decide what is the good which will afford that true satisfaction which he seeks; in the third sense, self-love is altogether bad.

[1] That this is so is the more evident from this, that pure egoism is an impossible philosophy. Egoistic systems have always taken the form of egoistic Hedonism. There must be something besides pure reference to self if there is to be any means of distinction.

§ 4. Benevolence.

On the other hand, regard for the satisfaction of others, what Bishop Butler called benevolence and what Mr. Spencer calls altruism, does furnish a real means of judgment. The man who determines to refrain from all conduct which would hinder the welfare (*i.e.* the satisfaction) of others will certainly be provided with a criterion by reference to which he may judge of the morality of his acts, and will be, on the whole, a moral man.

§ 5. Common Good.

This consideration leads directly to the question, Can the two principles, Egoism and Altruism, be perfectly coincident? Can it be true that the end which realises one man realises all? If this were so, the difficulty would vanish. If the end of conduct were equally an end for all persons, so that in realising himself the man at the same time realises others, and in realising others he realises himself, the apparent opposition between egoism and altruism would be shown to be an illusion. Only that disposition which leads a man to satisfy his desires irrespective of the welfare of others would remain as the opposite of Benevolence. And surely the principle which thus arises out of the identification of Self-love and Benevolence is involved in the very idea of an absolute good. If the good, the true end of conduct, is *absolute*, it must be good for self and good for all.

The ethical principle may, then, be stated in this way: No person can be truly realised unless by an end which realises every person; or shortly, The good of each is the good of all; or again, The true good is a common good.

§ 6. How proved?

It would be easy to show that this principle would cover most ordinary cases of morality. It would also be easy to show that it would justify most of the great social

institutions in which man finds a field for the exercise of his moral powers. Morality and social institutions demand the sacrifice by the individual of many private inclinations for the sake of a common good. Thus, also, the great law of sacrifice could be justified, and the principle enunciated above shown to be one which would account for the heroic side of morality.

But this kind of proof is not sufficient; for it is possible to maintain that the sacrifice of private inclination for the sake of a good conceived as common is a mere matter of accommodation, and that the individual is only bound to submit to it on the ground that, by the sacrifice of a certain amount of his private gratification, he gains security and more certain enjoyment for those inclinations which are not so restricted. Common sense is always pleased with the attempt to explain unselfishness in terms of selfishness. Again, many critical minds will fail to see how this principle, which regards the good as common, covers all cases of so-called "duties to self." Competition is a recognised element in human life, and, under the shadow of the great doctrine of Evolution, occupies a secure position as an essential factor in progress. Every man holds it a duty he owes to himself to do the best he can for himself in the struggle for existence, and nowadays has the satisfaction of feeling that, in thus exerting himself, he is acting in accordance with the great law of progress. But how is competition reconcilable with the identity of all "goods"? How is the success of the man who wins "the good" of the man who is beaten? Professor H. Sidgwick maintains that Green, in affirming that "the idea of a true good does not admit of the distinction between good for self and good for others," placed a "gulf" "be-

tween himself and common sense;"[1] and this opinion of so distinguished an authority would doubtless be echoed by many thinking men, if, having grasped the full meaning of Green's statement, they were asked to accept it as merely a postulate implied in ordinary morality, or as based upon the "essential sociality of men."[2] If these are the only proofs by which it can be supported, the ethical principle will not be felt to have a very secure foundation. In truth, if this principle can find no other proofs than these, it is a tremendous assumption, and lies open to cynical attack as a principle especially constructed to suit the heroics of morality, and altogether unwarranted by common sense.

But, if the conclusions of Part I. of this book were sound, this principle is not an assumption at all, nor does it need to linger unproved until the natural history of ethical phenomena has been completed. If all Persons form a true community, then the end of one must be the end of each and of the whole. All Persons are mutually exclusive (*i.e.* they limit one another) yet are they One in God. Hence the Good for the whole is the Good for every separate member. The *True Good* for every man is a *Common Good* and an *Absolute Good.* And this is, in other words, the ethical principle which resulted from the identification of egoism and altruism.

When this position has been reached, morality assumes a form in which it at once commands infinite respect and attention. The meaning of the intensity of the feelings which ethical considerations have always stirred in the hearts of the greatest and best of men becomes

[1] In *Mind* for April 1884, p. 181.

[2] It is not meant that Green rested the doctrine on these grounds.

obvious. When morality is thought to be a means of pleasure, or to be the condition of social health, it fails to claim those high regards which are yielded to it the moment it is seen to result from man's connexion with God. Faith in the Good as one and the same for all spiritual beings, as much the Good for God as for men, is the high ethical creed which lifts our common human life from earth to heaven.

§ 7. What is the Ideal Form of the End?

As yet, all we know about the true good is that it is a common good and an absolute good. A further step can be taken by considering the question, What is the ideal form of the end? Nor does the answer to this question seem to be as far above our powers of determination as might perhaps be imagined.

We saw in our investigation of the metaphysical conditions of knowledge that the primary fact of experience is the antithesis of subject and object. But the object is not a mere thing; the true object is always *cosmic* in form. Thus the primary antithesis becomes a correlation of subject and cosmos. But it is not mere correlation. The subject is, by the exercise of its characteristic activity of self-determination, the determinant of the cosmos of experience. Every act of will gives a new determination to the whole cosmos of experience. Now the object of the will is always what is conceived as the good, and the perpetual determination of the cosmos takes place in the search for the good. The good, therefore, in which the self can rest as an end must be a particular determination of the cosmos of experience; yet not the cosmos regarded in itself, in abstraction from the subject. The good is the very activity of determination, self and cosmos in conjunction.

This conclusion is important. It shows that the good is concrete not abstract. It is found, not in any feeling, not in any idea, not even in any thing, but in the individual concrete act, in the concretion, that is, of self and cosmos. This consideration effectually disposes of any theory which makes the essence of the good to consist in any abstraction. Thus Hedonism, which finds the good in pleasure, is at once disallowed. Pleasure is a mere abstraction, the emotional element cut out from the whole of concrete fact and given a separate entity which it does not in reality possess. Similarly, all ethical theories which see the distinguishing characteristic of moral conduct in conformity with law, are, as already shown, convicted of inadequacy on the ground that they make the abstract the measure of the concrete. The good is to be found in the concrete act, and is therefore in every case individual and singular.

The good, then, in which the self can rest as an end is, on the objective side, a cosmos. But this cosmos will not be good for self if determined with reference to self only; for persons, though each as person, that is, for himself, is separate and unique, must yet be members in a higher order, combined by the operation of some transcendent principle of unity. They are all one in God. What is good for one is good for all. That conjunction of any self with its corresponding cosmos, which is the good for that self, must, then, form an element in a great social order in which *every* self finds its good in *its* corresponding cosmos. Thus we reach the idea of a social universe in which every person's capabilities shall receive their full realisation, and in which every person's realisation shall contribute to every other person's realisation. This is the Ultimate or

Ideal End, the *summum bonum*, the correlative of the perfected self.

It would be impossible to give any further definition of the Ultimate End, because it is impossible to know what are the possibilities of self-hood. Man cannot know what he has it in him to be until the End is attained.

§ 8. The Common Good implicit in Ordinary Morality.

This definition of the Ultimate End seems to be the fullest possible statement of the ethical principle. Moral conduct is the ordering of the desires with a view to the production of a social universe in which every Person shall find his true realisation. It is not meant, of course, that this idea of the end is present to the mind of every man who does right. Such a view would be contrary to all experience. It is meant, rather, that this statement makes explicit what is implicit in all conduct which can be truly called moral. The man who acts in a certain way, in preference to other possible ways, because he is anxious to do right, has in view an end which he conceives as absolutely valuable. He may decide upon his course of action by referring to recognised laws or customs, but his motive consists in the idea of an end which he presents to himself as possessed of absolute worth. It is an end which he presents to himself as, under the circumstances, his good. With it he identifies himself; in it he finds his realisation. But this is, after all, the mere form of good conduct. Man has actually found his true good by becoming social, by identifying his personal good with the good of his fellows. At first he finds his good in an end which is common to every member of the family to which he belongs. Next, the good is common to the tribe. Then to all true believers. Finally, as with the most ethically advanced of civilised men, it is common to all mankind. Now, what is all this

but the gradual rising into view of the idea of the end as a social universe in which every person shall find his true realisation.

When, however, it is said that moral conduct is the ordering of the desires with a view to the production of a social universe in which every person shall find his realisation, it is well to note that this end may be aimed at without even the conscious seeking of a common good. When a man determines to do what he regards as just or true or kind, he is consciously aiming at a common good. He is finding his personal good in the good of others. But a man may do what is just or true or kind without recognising the nature of the end even to that extent. And the reason is obvious. In most ordinary acts a man is guided by habit. If he has habituated himself to just or kind action, he will behave justly or kindly without having to aim consciously, in every instance, at justice or kindness. But he is none the less acting under the influence of the ethical principle, for it was the conscious identification of his own personal good with the good of others in many previous acts which created the habit. Thus the habit and the acts which flow from it are due to the subordination of the desires to the ethical principle.[1]

[1] Kant states his "practical imperative" in the following way :—"So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only" (Kant's *Theory of Ethics*, Dr. Abbott's translation, 3rd Ed. p. 47). This is the ethical principle thrown into the form of a command. The fundamental thought is that man as a rational being, a self-objectifying consciousness, is by his very nature an end in himself.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROXIMATE END

§ 1. Is the Principle remote from the Actual Needs of Life?

THE account of the Moral End which has just been given may be thought unsatisfactory, because it may seem remote from every-day life. It may seem to be a description of a "far-off divine event," or state of things, and so to be out of touch with ordinary conduct. What we need, it may be said, is a principle to help us to live our commonplace life in the world, to afford some definite aim in spite of the many perplexities and difficulties which arise out of the imperfect social order to which we belong. We want help to do right here and now, and how can such help come from the contemplation of an imaginary social universe in which every person shall find his true realisation?

Premising that this imaginary social universe is not to be conceived as good apart from its correspondence with self actually enjoying it, it must be granted at once that the Ideal End, or Ultimate Good, is relative to a set of circumstances at present non-existent. But this is a defect attaching to every ideal. When considering the relation between Will and Nature, between Freedom and Necessity, we saw that when any process is viewed as a whole it is found to be relative to an End. The Idea of the End is logically prior to the whole process; nor can the process

be fully understood except by reference to its controlling Idea. But from the very fact that the Idea of the End is relative to the whole process, and not merely to any stage in the process, it is obvious that no stage, when taken in abstraction from the whole, can correspond to the full statement of the Idea. Every stage is a partial working out of the Idea; but the Idea finds its full realisation not in any separate stage, but in the whole. At the same time, it is true that every stage depends for its full explanation upon the whole process, and therefore upon the Idea.[1] Thus the Idea of the Moral End, what we have called the Ideal End or Ultimate End, though it cannot exactly correspond to the particular circumstances of any concrete case, is the true key to the understanding of every case. It is therefore, in the fullest sense, *The Ethical Principle.*

§ 2. The Proximate Good.

But every collocation of circumstances which can be a field for action has its Best. The circumstances may be, as compared with the whole of life, trivial or of the utmost importance. But, whatever be their value, there is a certain range of possibilities of action open to the man. These possibilities exist because the man has many desires and interests corresponding to his circumstances. The question for him is, With which desire shall he identify himself? Which possibility shall he make actual? Now, in the light

[1] The analogy which is here assumed to exist between a historical process as controlled by an idea and a natural process as controlled by an idea, may seem inadmissible; but it is not so. A historical process moves to an end just as much as a natural process, though the idea of the end is realised in a different manner. In the natural process the necessity of physical causation is dominant throughout. In the historical process the idea realises itself by gradually becoming more and more clearly the idea of the end at which the persons whose activity operates in the process consciously aim.

of the conclusions at which we have arrived, this question becomes, Which course of action contributes most to the production of a social condition in which all shall find their realisation? Which tends most to the common good? Among all ends which are possible under the circumstances, that end which tends most to the common good is the good of that particular case. This end which is, under the circumstances, the good, may be called the *Proximate Good.* The Ultimate Good is the ideal end, the full realisation of all persons. The proximate good is the fullest realisation of all persons which can be attained by the agent under the circumstances. It is that correspondence between self and cosmos, that activity, which results from the ordering of the desires according to the ethical principle. The principle has therefore its application to every concrete instance. The end is attained in the act whenever the desires are duly ordered.

Thus the good is always one. It never conflicts with itself. It is found in the concrete act, and is, therefore, perfectly individualised.

§ 3. Morality covers the whole of Life.

This conclusion is of the very highest importance. It shows that morality covers the whole of life. There is no detail of man's conduct as man, no action which is properly human, which is not the concern of Ethics. Morality is not concerned exclusively with the great and heroic things which ought to be, but too often are not, nor only with the judgment and correction of those serious aberrations which we call sin and crime, but also with every little decision in the course of ordinary conduct. This may, perhaps, seem a rather dismal result. Is existence to be made altogether serious? Is there to be no place left for the trivial and the indifferent in conduct? Is the rule of life

to be, all work and no play? Such a result would be indeed dreadful. But it is not the consequence of the doctrine just stated; and that because the circumstances of any particular case of conduct may be, as already intimated, of any degree of importance relatively to the whole of life. To exaggerate the importance of every particular decision would be indeed a most serious error, and one which receives no sanction from the theory of life which is here adopted. For, if the good is perfectly individualised, then must a man find his good among the possibilities of every individual case; and sometimes these possibilities will be concerned with great things, sometimes they will touch the little things of life only. The good may be the performance of some great act of statesmanship or philanthropy, or it may be the enjoyment of some athletic exercise, or the doing of some little service of courtesy or kindliness.

§ 4. The Expedient.

If all conduct is subject to morality, it may be thought, what is the meaning of the distinction which is usually made between the right and the expedient? Is not expediency an acknowledged rule in certain cases, just because it is universally recognised that there are cases to which the ethical criterion, whatever it be, can have no application. The answer to this question seems to be that there are many cases for which the generally recognised moral standards do not legislate, cases which cannot be settled by reference to the moral code. Such cases are supposed to be outside the domain of morality, because they cannot be brought within the jurisdiction of some particular moral law. They are therefore settled either by considerations of public welfare; or by finding out, not what ought to be done, but what can be done, subject to the limitations

imposed by the conflicting desires of the interested parties. Either of these methods is generally named expediency. But the former method, if honestly carried out, is as moral as any method can be, for public welfare means common good. While the latter, if adopted as a principle in conscious disregard of the public welfare, is as immoral as any method can be. Expediency is therefore a name either for morality, or for immorality, according as it is, or is not, identical with decision by reference to considerations of public welfare.

§ 5. The Ethical Principle provides a moving Standard.

Whether we consider the great things of life or the small, every situation which affords an opportunity for conduct, that is, for a voluntary act, has its best, which is, under the circumstances, the good. This good is for the man, at the time, his proximate good. Now this proximate end is a stage in the realisation of the ultimate end. The ethical principle is therefore no rigid standard. It is a standard that moves with every movement of the human spirit, that adapts itself to all groups of circumstances, no matter how various, which can condition human activity. So far it is relative. Yet, in so far as the principle prevails, it tends to bring about a state of things which approximates ever more and more to the circumstances which correspond to the Ultimate Good. So far it is absolute; or, rather, in its full truth it is absolute. It is thus a principle for the moment, and a progressive principle at the same time. It is progressive in the true sense of the term, because it is not only applicable to every moment in the movement of the human spirit, but tends to an end.

Now this is exactly the kind of principle demanded by the conditions of the problem. No rigid standard, such as a code of laws, can provide a measure for conduct; for

conduct is activity. Its unit is, as we have seen, the concrete act; and the concrete act is always unique, and therefore measureless by any rigid standard.

§ 6. Can the Standard be applied?

The first thought which will probably occur to the reader at this point will, no doubt, be this: Admitting the principle to be of universal application, is it not too formal to be of any use in the ever-recurring complexity of circumstances?

The solution of this difficulty, so far as it can be solved, involves the whole further working out of ethical theory. It would, of course, be quite impossible to take the principle as stated and apply it to every case of conduct. The principle is not, as we have just seen, a mere measure, a mere standard of reference, by which to estimate the quality of conduct. The principle is rather, if it be the true ethical principle, the informing spirit of all that is truly ethical in human life. As stated, it is a mere empty form, but its filling, its content, is not supplied by any one concrete act, regarded in abstraction, but rather, as already indicated, by the whole process of human life so far as that process has been an orderly development. Life cannot therefore be divided into units, concrete acts, and each unit judged separately by comparison with the Ethical Idea. The act can be brought to the test of the Idea only by being made to take its place as an element in the whole moral system.

§ 7. The Principle actually operative in Life.

The aid which a theory of Ethics may be expected to give in the solution of difficulties will be considered later. The point of importance now is that it is by the principle here set forth that men actually decide their conduct when they do good. A man does good, not only when he determines to obey the Law in spite of great temptation to

the contrary, nor only when he engages in philanthropic undertakings, but in general when he fulfils the ordinary duties of life. Every man has a certain station to occupy and certain functions to exercise in the social system. Most cases of well-doing consist in occupying that position and exercising those functions in a proper manner. If, as we have seen, the end of man is the realisation of his capabilities, then surely it is plain that no man can attain his end in and for himself alone. He must attain self-realisation as a member of a community, that is, by exercising his proper functions as an element in the social system. Now the man exercises his functions as a member of the social system by yielding to the demands which the system makes upon him. Morality comes to him in the concrete. In infancy he learns to restrict the gratification of his desires in obedience, not to any abstract principle, but to the usage of society. He is told that one thing is good another bad, one right another wrong, one nice another nasty, and these expressions, vague as they are to him, appeal to him just because he is a self-objectifying consciousness, and seeks somewhat which he presents to himself as "good for self"; but, as to what is good and what is bad, he is guided by the custom of society. Then, when he grows to years in which he is capable of reflection, he becomes aware that the society to which he belongs exalts certain Laws, Virtues, and Institutions into positions of relatively supreme authority. If a man is to live at all as a member of society, he must submit to certain laws, cultivate certain virtues, and take his part in certain institutions. Let him break the law, "Thou shalt do no murder," let him fail to cultivate to some degree the virtue of self-control, let him defy the police regulations of his

country or town, and he will soon discover that no man can live as a man unless he submit to the rules of society.

No man can realise his capabilities, then, except as a member of a community which acknowledges certain laws, presupposes certain virtues as essential to its members, and upholds certain institutions, and all with a view to a common good. Now all these laws, virtues, institutions are due to the Ethical Idea. It is the logical *prius*, the explanation, the formative principle of them all. Man as man is an end to himself. Hence he has the idea of a Best which he has it in him to be. As he develops, this Best is found in a common good—a good for the family, for the tribe, and so on. Every man has his place in the social system, and attains his good by filling that place properly, and so, in realising himself, contributes to the realisation of the whole. As society increases in complexity, the function of each individual as a member of the community becomes more and more specialised, and the man finds, as a rule, his proper work, the work in which he is at the same time to realise himself and the community to which he belongs, lying close to him, waiting to be done. He has not to stop and debate with himself the question, Is this the right thing for me to do? He has not to pause and apply some rule, some abstract law, or to make some calculation of the Hedonistic value of his action.[1] He has just to do the thing which lies nearest to his hand, whether it be called business, amusement, culture, or religion. A man lives a moral life by living out, to the best of his ability, his share of the life which is common to him and the social system in which he is an element. When he lives thus, he is really guiding himself by the ethical principle, for, as we

[1] See Dewey, *op. cit.* p. 134.

have seen, the Idea is useless for guidance as a mere empty form, and the content which makes it useful is simply the whole process of human life.

§ 8. The importance of knowing the Principle.

What, then, it may be said, is the advantage of considering the Ethical Idea at all? If the way to lead a moral life is to be guided by the claims which society makes, and to do, with diligence, the nearest duty, what is the use of seeking for any further principle? But surely it is a great advantage to any man who is engaged in a work to be aware of what he is doing. There are factories in which the work is so thoroughly specialised that each individual worker has just some one small function. One man may have to cut a card into a particular shape, the next man to apply a particular daub of paint. Many workers may be able to get through their special tasks creditably, and yet have very indistinct ideas of the whole process. But it is obvious that there must be some who have clear ideas of the meaning of the whole. So it is with the work of life. The great mass of workers may perform their task fairly well, and yet have no distinct conception of its meaning. But it evidently makes for the welfare of the whole system that some should seek to know what it is that we are all engaged in doing. Now the Idea of the End is the meaning of Life.

Further, if the moral principle at which we have arrived is the true one, it is very important to know it, because by knowing it we are delivered from the influence of other moral theories which are either false or relatively imperfect. If the true end of conduct be found to be a common good, we are at once delivered from every egoistic theory, such for example as the egoistic Hedonism of Hobbes. Every such doctrine is seen at once to be essentially immoral.

So, also, when the End is found to be self-realisation in activity the insufficiency of every Hedonistic theory, whether egoistic or universalistic, becomes apparent. Again, when it is recognised that the end is truly common, not merely an end for the whole social system, but an end for every person individually, it becomes evident that any theory fails which ascribes the moral development of mankind to the play of purely natural forces, and so makes the individual a *mere* element in a complex organisation to which as a whole, and not as well to each individual separately, the end is relative. It is not the least advantage of truth that it is perhaps the best means of getting rid of falsehood.

§ 9. Can a Man rise above the Society to which he belongs?

It may seem to be implied in the account given above, that a man cannot rise above the society to which he belongs. If goodness consists in fulfilling the duties imposed by the social system, how can there be room for that opposition between the good man and the world which, as it fills so large a space in moral and religious experience, must correspond to some reality? How, again, can the social and moral reformer find a sphere for his labours? It is only, however, a superficial view of the doctrine of this chapter which could lead to this conclusion. Society depends, as we have seen, for its very existence upon certain laws, virtues, and institutions being recognised as essential by its members. But, it does not follow that, because these laws, virtues, and institutions are accorded a position of supreme importance, that therefore the laws are always obeyed, the virtues always characterise the members of the community, the institutions are always maintained in full efficiency. On the contrary, there is no society in which the members live fully up to the principles they profess. The good man may, then, find himself in conflict

with the world of his time, and the reformer may find a field for his exertions, because society fails through a widespread violation in practice of the standards which are professedly recognised.

Further, it does not follow, because in general a man is to be moral by doing his duty and taking his part "in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call him," that therefore he must always regard the standards recognised by the society to which he belongs as perfect. Almost every intelligent person can recall instances in which he has discovered imperfections in the institutions which enter into the composition of the social system of which he forms a part. These imperfections generally take the form of what is commonly called unfairness. Some detail in the constitution of the institution is found to impose unfair burdens upon some as compared with others, or to thrust some into situations in which they are subjected to great temptations. Here, then, is an opening for the work of the reformer.

Furthermore, there are in every community standards which, though not formally recognised, not, that is, acknowledged by the religious, legal, and educational authorities, yet have a great influence over the popular mind. Such are codes of honour or etiquette, commercial or diplomatic morality. Such standards may be far below the confessed standards. In some periods they fall so low as to create a kind of inner social order of their own in which distinctly immoral customs are sanctioned. Sometimes they form a body of opinion and custom so strong that minds habituated to them come to regard the confessed standards as unreal. Readers of Bishop Butler's *Sermons* will remember how he speaks of "a secret prejudice against, and frequently

open scorn of, all talk of public spirit and real goodwill to our fellow-creatures" as common in his time. False standards of this kind, and, above all, the occurrence of periods when such false standards obtain a wide recognition, explain most clearly how it is that the good man finds himself so often in conflict with "the world," and how the social and moral reformer finds a sphere for his labours.

But how, it may be asked, is the moral reformer to go to work? If all he has to guide him is the actual process of moral development, how can he ever take a step out into a new world of moral construction. He may, perhaps it will seem, be able to rebuke those who fall below the standard which is professed by the traditional authorities, but how can he contribute to any real progress? Is there no help to be had in the ethical principle? It may assist to the understanding of the important problem raised by this question to consider the case in which some institution is found to be imperfect, because it unfairly imposes a burden on some as compared with others. Here the unfairness, if it exist at all, will be found to be a breach of the social principle. One man is treated as though he were simply a means to relieve another man of a burden. The dignity and position of man as man, as one who is an end in himself, is disregarded. The desire of one is gratified at the expense of another's welfare. Of course there may be very considerable controversy as to the matter of fact, whether or not the welfare of one is really sacrificed to another's gratification. But suppose the case proved, and it follows at once that a wrong exists which must be righted, if there is any justice to be had from those who have power to make a change.

Progress, then, will generally take place through the

discovery that some institution is not as social as it should be.

It may seem premature to enter, at this stage of our inquiry, into the question of moral progress; and, indeed, the general question of moral progress cannot now be dealt with fittingly. But it seemed necessary to deal with it so far, for the purpose of showing that the ethical principle as stated above does justify one moral rule of the utmost importance. That rule may be stated in the following ways, some of them very familiar.

In determining any action the interests of others should count for as much as the agent's own. Every person should be treated as an end in himself, and not as a means to the agent's advantage. "Do to others as you would have them do to you."[1] "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The test of every action is its social value—value to the community, value to every one.

[1] Professor H. Sidgwick points out (*Methods of Ethics*, bk. iii. chap. xiii.), that the Golden Rule is "unprecise in statement, for one might wish for another's co-operation in sin, and be willing to reciprocate it. Nor is it even true to say that we ought to do to others only what we think it right for them to do to us; for no one will deny that there may be differences in the circumstances—and even in the natures—of two individuals, A and B, which would make it wrong for A to treat B in the way in which it is right for B to treat A."

Unpreciseness of this sort may generally be detected in proverbial or popular statements, but the defect is apparent, not real, for every such statement appeals to common sense for its interpretation, and demands honesty of purpose in its application. The courtier who justified flattery on the ground that he liked to be flattered, and so obeyed the golden rule, condemned himself by his very ingenuity. The man who applies the rule honestly will not be misled. Statements which strain after scientific accuracy lose in popular utility what they gain in preciseness.

CHAPTER V

THE UNITY OF THE TRUE GOOD

§ 1. Classification of Duties.

WE saw the necessity of a metaphysical deduction of the ethical principle, because otherwise it would be hard to give a satisfactory answer to the egoistic objector, and because it is hard to see how the idea of a common good covers all cases of so-called duties to self. Life is a field for competition as well as for co-operation, and some of the "goods" men seek and win are gained by them through struggle with their fellows. The gain of one is the loss of another. How, then, can all good be common good? It is customary to divide duties into three classes: duties towards God, duties towards our fellow-men, and duties towards ourselves. The division furnishes a convenient classification. But, if the good is essentially common, all duty must be at once duty to God, to our neighbour, and to self. And the question arises, Is this so? If it is possible to make out a good case to the contrary, a serious doubt is cast upon our whole doctrine.

§ 2. Duty to Self.

It is, no doubt, a man's duty to do the best he can for himself, and it is also his duty to do the best he can for himself in competition with his neighbours. He is right to strive for reward, and, when he can, to win. But how can such winning be the good of all men? It is obvious, of

course, that by improving his individual powers a man increases his capacity of usefulness. It is also plain that if it is sometimes an advantage to win, it is also sometimes an advantage to lose. Loss braces character, and, if it is not crushing, nerves to further effort, and so helps to ultimate success. And so the success of a man who wins in the struggle of life may be the very best thing that could happen those whom he defeats. In general, it is surely true that a man owes it to society, as well as to himself, to make the best use he can of the opportunities of self-advancement which come his way. By so doing he benefits both himself and the society to which he belongs. Of course, it is possible to compete with others without due regard to their rights or their welfare; but there can be scarcely any reasonable doubt that competition, when tempered with due regard to the welfare of the weak, is beneficial to society as a whole and to every individual member. When, in answer to this, it is urged that the good cannot be one and the same for all, because it "consists—at least to some extent—in objects that admit of being competed for," it is forgotten that in all cases of fair competition there is an element of ignorance as to which result is really the good of the case. The mind of every man who enters into any competition should be, May I win this if I deserve[1] to win it. If competition is moral at all, it must rest on the principle that it is good for all parties that he who deserves to win should win. And in every case of regulated competition, regulation should to a large extent take the form of securing that, as much as possible, success shall fall to the truly deserving. And every man who enters into any competition with the will to secure the prize by

[1] *Desert* here means, not moral desert, but the desert of skill.

deserving it, is certainly aiming at an end which is best for self and best for all.

§ 3. The Case of the Suicide.

The case of competition is not so hard as it seems at first sight. Much more difficult are instances in which there seems to be no reference to any social system at all. Mr. Muirhead[1] considers the case of a suicide who is not bound to life by "social ties" of any sort, who has neither wife nor family, who is "without friends, money, trade, or the hope of acquiring them. Here, if anywhere, it might be supposed our judgment refers to the individual. In parting with his life he is merely parting with his own. If there is a duty in the matter, it is merely a duty to himself. There is no duty to society, and therefore society has no right to interfere with what is strictly his own affair." Mr. Muirhead solves the problem by maintaining that "no man has a right to take his own life, because no man has a life of his own to take. His life has been given him, and has been made all that it is . . . by society. He cannot morally part with it without consent of a society which is joint owner with him in it. He carries on his life as a joint concern: he cannot dissolve the partnership without the consent of his partner in it. Perhaps in the case selected society may have shamefully neglected its part; so far society is wrong, and is responsible for the state to which matters have come, but this does not absolve the individual from his duty to society. Two wrongs do not make a right." It is impossible not to feel that there is force in this contention, but the would-be suicide may reply that the cases are not parallel. A partnership, he may say, is a voluntary arrangement; and a partner is bound to take his share of the responsibility, because he has en-

[1] *Elements of Ethics*, book iv. chap. i. § 67.

gaged by contract to do so. But life is not so. No man ever contracted with society as Faust with the evil one. Why, then, is a man bound to keep himself alive because society demands it, or the law pretends it is his duty?

It may be answered that society is an organic growth in which the individual is merely an element. He is an element in the whole, and therefore his being and welfare are altogether subordinate to the whole. To this there is the ready answer that if society is a product of Evolution, due to the play of natural forces, the case of self-destruction which is here supposed can be justified on the ground that the man is one of the many individuals whom the process of natural selection has doomed to destruction. The race improves by the destruction of its worthless members; and so the man may even bring himself to regard his act as a contribution to the improvement of the race. To live, when society has manifestly cast him out as worthless, is to do positive harm. The truth is that, if society is regarded as a mere natural product, it possesses no supreme authority by which to compel the reverence of a self-conscious being.

Again, it may be answered that the self in a man is, in truth, "the reflection of a moral order."[1] The self is not properly an element in a natural system, but in an intellectual system in which every element is correlative to the whole, and the whole to every element. The good of the self must, then, be always identical with the good of every element; and the life of the individual is not, in truth, his own life at all, but one aspect of the life of society. This is the full philosophical conception of organic unity applied to society; but, though there is high philosophic authority for this view, there are,

[1] This is Mr. Muirhead's solution. See the whole of chap. i. (book iv.)

as we saw above,[1] grave reasons for doubting its sufficiency. The essential egoism of every individual mind is a perpetual protest against it. No man can really regard himself, or even think himself, as the mere correlative of all other men. For himself each one is, by the very constitution of his intellectual nature, the ultimate unit of his own world of experience. He can only think society as organic by subordinating other persons to himself in thought, and regarding them for the time not as subjects, but as objects. The true correlative of the self in each man is not society, but the cosmos of experience, that is, nature so far as it is known to him.

As we saw long ago, the one conception which can unify the good by identifying personal good with common good is the conception of a transcendent principle of unity forming a bond of union among all persons. Such a transcendent principle is the ultimate presupposition implied in the possibility of a universe of personal beings. It is, then, because man must seek the source of his being and his connexion with his fellows in his relation with God, that all *goods* must be identified. The good of each man is the good of every man, because all are one in God. Here is the true answer to the argument for suicide. No matter how separate a man's interests may seem to be from society, they cannot be separated from God. The life of the man is not his own, not because it is society's, but because it is God's; or rather, it is society's, because it is first God's.

This conclusion does not seem to be inconsistent with experience of actual moral phenomena. It seems to be a fairly well established fact that nothing drives the unfortun-

[1] Part i. Appendix ii.

ate to suicide so much as loss of faith in God. While a real faith in God remains, life has a sanctity, a value, which no misfortune, or separation from society, can destroy.

§ 4. Principle of Reconciliation.

It follows from all this that the opposition between duty to self and duty to others cannot be overcome except by rising to a higher point of view, from which it becomes evident that all duties are duties to God. It is not meant, of course, that, because from this higher point of view duties appear as duties to God, therefore they are the less truly duties to self or duties to others. The meaning is that, when the man and his duty are traced to their source in God, the distinction vanishes, and all duties are found to be at once duties to self, to others, and to God.

At the same time, this threefold classification of duties is not merely convenient, but also indicative of a real distinction which is worth consideration. In the duties, as duties, there is no distinction. The ground of classification lies in the nature of the desires or interests in the gratification of which the good of the case is found. Some desires and interests correspond to ends which concern the agent's own mental or bodily condition or his relation to the world. When the good is found in the satisfaction of one of these it is a case of duty to self. Thus it is a man's duty to read, or to refrain from reading, certain books in order to gain mental improvement or avoid mental injury. Or it is his duty to be temperate in food and drink. Or, again, it may be his duty to save money, in order to provide for sickness or old age, quite irrespective of the claims which others may have upon him. These are all duties to self, because the end in which the good of each case is found happens to be an end which more immediately concerns the agent himself.

§ 5. Duty to our Neighbour.

Similarly, duties to others are cases in which the good is found in the gratification of some desire or interest which has for its immediate end the welfare of others.

§ 6. Duty toward God.

All duty is, as we have seen, duty toward God, just as it is also duty to self and to others. But there are also duties which involve the satisfaction of interests which are immediately connected with our belief in God and the conceptions we have formed of His nature and will with regard to us. These may be called, in a special sense, duties toward God.

It is a mistake, however, to suppose that the religious man has duties to perform of a different kind from those which are obligatory upon the man who does not profess religious belief. Religious duties are duties, not because they are religious, but because they are moral. The real meaning of the distinction lies in the fact that the religious man has, on account of his belief, a multitude of interests which the unbelieving man cannot have; and just because there is this host of religious interests duty will be very often found in the satisfaction of them. Thus, to a man who believes in the doctrines of Christianity, prayer, attendance at public worship, participation in Christian rites, etc., become, all in due time and place, duties; and that, not because they are religious, but because, to him who believes the doctrines on which they rest, they are matters of moral obligation. Such duties may be regarded, in a special and subordinate sense, as Godward, or religious duties.

When duty in general is regarded in its Godward aspect, as arising out of the relation which all men bear to God, the highest point of view has been reached; for thus the end of conduct is identified with the end of the universe. The ultimate end is kept in view. And this is one of the

greatest of the many great services that religion has rendered to morality. The average man has been enabled to fix his attention upon the great ideal, and, consequently, to live his lowly life without forgetting its splendid meaning. Further, the religious point of view is the highest, because it helps the man to trace himself back to the ground of his being and capacities, and so to transcend, at least in symbol, the opposition between himself and his neighbour. In Christian phraseology, the Fatherhood of God implies the brotherhood of men. Furthermore, the Godward aspect of duty has been, and is, of immense service to morality by adding a peculiar intensity to the regards of which good and bad conduct are the objects. The strong feelings which have clustered round our judgments of moral approval and disapproval are, to a very great extent, due to the teaching of religion. Goodness, as that which corresponds to God's nature and wins God's approbation, has been exalted to heaven. Badness, as sin, an offence against God, has become an object of measureless condemnation.

CHAPTER VI

MORAL CODES

§ 1. The Legal Aspect of Morality.

We saw at the beginning that there are two usual ways of expressing the moral quality of conduct, one referring to the end to which action is relative, the other expressing estimation by reference to law. So far, though for convenience we have found it necessary to employ to some extent the vocabulary of law, and to speak of right, duty, obligation, we have been concerned almost exclusively with conduct considered as good or valuable for an end. This we found to be the fundamental ethical conception. But it is necessary to give some space to the legal aspect of morality. Though not basal in logical order, it seems to be prior in order of time; and it certainly represents most fully the common view of the nature of morality, and the common mode of deciding moral difficulties.

The Ethical Idea embodies itself in the sphere of understanding in Laws, in the sphere of character in Virtues, in Society in Institutions. At present we are concerned with the first of these three—the avatar of the Idea, in the sphere of understanding, as Law.

§ 2. External Law.

We have seen that no set of laws can be the measure of the concrete, for laws are essentially abstract, and therefore can never correspond fully to the infinite variety of detail

which is characteristic of the concrete. And what is thus evident in general is amply verified by reference to the history of morality.

There can be no doubt, however, that by most people —even civilised and educated people—morality is conceived as the conformity of conduct with law. This way of regarding good conduct is inevitable, because it is the direct outcome of history. Whether in the history of the development of the individual, or in the history of the development of the race, morality makes its first appearance as the yielding of the will to a demand which seems to be made from without. The parent or schoolmaster of the child, or the king or lawgiver or priest of the tribe, utters his "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not," and exacts implicit obedience. To be good is to obey the command. And if the question is asked, Why must the child or the tribesman obey the command? the answer seems to be, Because, if he disobey, he will suffer punishment. Fear of consequences is the only sanction of any morality which consists in conformity with law imposed from without. But this very result forces us to believe that law imposed from without cannot be the ultimate truth of morality; for to do good simply from fear, in order to avoid the consequences which follow doing evil, is not moral conduct at all. The truth of things obviously lies much deeper than this. Though law imposed from without may be a necessary means of discipline, the fact is that law cannot be imposed from without upon intelligent creatures unless the intelligent creatures have in them some element which responds to the claim of authority. The external law is a means of instruction, because it draws forth latent capacity. As a self-

conscious being, man seeks some end as good for self. External instruction appeals to him as one who seeks a good, and indicates the ways in which he is to find it. That this is the only way in which an external power can be a means of inducing to the performance of moral conduct is evident from this consideration, that obedience to the commands of a superior power simply because it is a power greater than the agent's can never be the essence of morality. If it could, then the Christian martyrs were wrong and the apostates through fear were right. Nor does it make the slightest difference in the principle of the case if the power which is respected simply because it is power is the greatest in the universe. To obey commands simply because they are the commands of the greatest power, and not because the commands are in themselves just or right, would be essentially immoral. Thus law imposed from without can never constitute morality. It is not meant, of course, that fear has no share in the moral instruction of mankind. Fear of punishment has, no doubt, been one of the most potent of educational instruments; but its value consists, not in sanctioning morality, but in awakening the dull or unenlightened conscience to the reality and importance of moral distinctions. Dread of the lash will make the apathetic slave-heart ask, Why am I thus made to tremble? And, the moment conscience awakes, the answer must be, Not because he has power, but because I have done wrong.

§ 3. Internal Law.

When it has once become evident that external law cannot constitute morality, it remains for the advocates of the legal theory of Ethics to take refuge in conscience as the source of law. We cannot now enter into a detailed criticism of the Intuitionalist view of Ethics. That it

involves a very large element of truth cannot be doubted, for man as a self-objectifying agent, or Person, seeks, by his very constitution, a good for self, and in seeking the good, he must believe that it is. But it is not to be supposed that conscience is a faculty which presents man with a ready-made code of laws, nor is it to be imagined that the correspondence of conduct with the laws recognised by conscience is what constitutes the essence of morality; for consciences conflict, and whose conscience is to be the standard? And again, laws conflict, and who is to legislate for the law? As pointed out above,[1] the conflict of laws has ever been one of the commonest and most perplexing of ordinary ethical difficulties, and we are thrown back upon the general principle already stated more than once that no set of laws can provide a measure for conduct.

§ 4. What, then, are Moral Laws?

If, then, moral laws do not express the ultimate truth of morality, what is their real nature, and why are they important? The answer must be, that moral laws are summaries, generalisations, which cover a wide range of cases in which the circumstances have some near resemblance. They owe their well-nigh infinite importance to the fact that they group the chief duties of man under formulæ which are clear and easily applicable to most ordinary cases. They are the principal duties framed to suit the common understanding; they are, indeed, the forms in which the understanding grasps ethical truth. They have come to light in the course of social development, but mainly through the teaching of religion. And, as these moral codes are absolutely necessary as safeguards of society and for the moral improvement of the individual, we have only to think of them in order to realise how vast

[1] See part ii. chap. i. § 3.

has been the contribution of historical religion to historical morality. The proclamation of the Ten Commandments was certainly one of the most important epochs in the ethical history of mankind.

§ 5. Difficulty of framing a New Law.

It will help to the realisation of the importance of such an epoch to consider how difficult our modern reformers find it to frame a single new commandment. Some of our modern crusades have been productive of great good, but when enthusiastic propagandists attempt to lay down new moral laws, such as: Thou shalt take no strong drink, or Thou shalt not risk money upon chance in hope of gain, they at once find themselves in difficulties. It cannot be denied that the consumption of strong drink is in a multitude of instances immoral, and it seems to be true that gambling, using the word as it is commonly applied to particular cases, is indefensible. The difficulty is so to group the cases that the general statement of them may not be inclusive of multitudes of other cases which every one will detect in a moment and recognise as not cases of immorality at all.

These considerations show how hopeless are some of the ethical conundrums with which people often perplex themselves. The general question, Is gambling immoral? is one which cannot be answered with Yes or No. It is a question which cannot receive any answer, for the problem it propounds is altogether illusive. It seems evident, too, that, no matter how the word *gambling* is defined, the difficulty must still remain; for the difficulty consists in this, that the word gambling (unless it be deprived of all definite meaning by being expressly limited to those cases which are, on account of particular considerations, manifestly immoral) groups together an immense number of

heterogeneous cases, because they correspond in the one respect that in each there is money or something of value risked upon chance in hope of gain, while, at the same time, each case differs from every other case in an indefinite number of other particulars. It is the old difficulty back again, the attempt to set a finite measure to the infinite, an abstract measure to the concrete.[1]

But, it may be thought, this objection applies to every moral law; and there can be no doubt that it does, and, for that reason, conformity with law cannot constitute morality. But, though the objection applies in some degree to every moral law, it does not apply to the recognised laws to a degree great enough to make them misleading. The truth seems to be that there are certain kinds of action which are so essentially anti-social that it is better not even to contemplate the possibility of their being, under any circumstances, admissible. Hence the prohibition of them must be expressed in the form of universal laws, though the fact that these laws are not real universals will become apparent whenever any two of them happen to come into conflict.

§ 6. The true Universal.

It is necessary to distinguish carefully between laws which prohibit or enjoin special classes of acts—these quasi-universals with which we have been dealing—and

[1] To avoid misunderstanding, it is well to explain that it is not denied that the *gambler* (commonly so-called) is the victim of a most degrading vice. The point here is the impossibility of making a satisfactory generalisation. How impossible this is will become evident if it is considered that a man might become a gambler in the worst sense even though he never risked his money upon anything but skill. And none can say it is immoral to risk money upon skill. Such a generalisation would condemn nearly all commercial undertakings.

The discussion above is simplified by shutting out skill and taking into consideration only those cases which depend upon chance.

laws which are real universals because they are modes of expressing the one supreme law of conduct. There is but one really universal law of morality. It is that which decides the value of every act by referring it to the ethical end. It may be expressed: Act with a view to the true good; or, Act with a view to the realisation of all persons. Now we saw that the true good is absolute. It is the good for self. It is the good for others. It is the good for God. The one universal rule is therefore capable of being expressed in different ways according as the good is regarded from these different sides.

When self is thought of the rule is simply, Do good, or Act rightly. This formula is, for practical purposes, a mere platitude; and the fact that it is so agrees with the conclusion arrived at above, that pure self-regard can provide no criterion of conduct. The whole meaning resides in the implication that there is a good for every man to do.

When other men are thought of, the one supreme law becomes: "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Or, when expressed in terms which emphasise the emotional element in conduct: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this great rule. It is the true universal brought down from heaven to earth and made level with the comprehension of the average man. It is thrown, too, into forms which make it of the utmost practical utility. For the estimation of everyday conduct, for the dissolving of ethical doubts, for the promotion of moral progress and reform, it is the most potent instrument we possess.

Finally, when the good is regarded in its Godward aspect, the universal law becomes: Fear God and keep His commandments. This rule is rightly said to cover the

whole duty of man. It traces morality to its source in God, and makes man's consciousness of his relation to God (described in emotional language as fear or reverence) the ground upon which to justify the life of duty. But this view of the law is expressed in a far loftier manner in the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Here again the language of emotion is used; but it is the emotion which adheres to the recognition of fundamental unity. We saw above that it is only by tracing humanity to its source and bond of union in God that the identification of egoism with altruism can be justified. It is man's relation with God which justifies that faith which is fundamental to a moral life, faith in an end which is absolutely worthy, good for all. *The love of God* is, then, the expression in terms of personal regard of that highest spring of conduct which may be called *Devotion to the Good.* It is respect for the one supreme universal law expressed in the highest and most impressive manner.

CHAPTER VII

OBLIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

§ 1. Moral Necessity.

WHEN morality is conceived as the conformity of conduct with law, the question arises, Why are men bound to obey the law? The consciousness that there is a bond of some sort is one of the most marked of ethical phenomena, and is commonly called the sense of obligation or of duty. Duty is one of the most important and fruitful of ethical ideas. It is the common mode in which the *necessity*[1] of morality is forced upon the attention of men. And it has the advantage of adding to the mere thought of obligation, or bondage, an element expressive of the nobleness of subjection to the moral law. Duty carries with it the thought of exalted privilege, as well as the thought of necessity.

§ 2. External Constraint.

It is well to distinguish carefully between the history of the way in which men have become conscious of their subjection to duty, and the true meaning and justification of the idea itself. Confusion between these two very different things has led to a wholly untenable theory of the nature of obligation. It is maintained by some[2] that the element of "coerciveness," or necessity, which is the

[1] Moral necessity must be distinguished from physical necessity.

[2] Bain and Spencer. See part iii. ch. iv. § 8, for fuller criticism.

essence of obligation, takes its rise from external constraint. Because man learned his duty under the discipline of political, religious, and social authorities, it is thought that fear of punishment (using the word in a wide sense) is the real meaning of obligation. But it is not very long since we saw that to do good from fear of the consequences of doing evil is not real morality. To have the will to steal or commit murder and to refrain only because the act will lead to imprisonment or hanging is not genuine goodness. Nor, again, as we saw, is it moral to submit to mere power, because it is able to inflict punishment according to its caprice and quite independently of the justice or injustice of the sentence. The idea of obligation cannot, then, be justified by tracing it to external constraint, for that is to justify morality by reducing it to immorality.

§ 3. Command of God.

Nor, again, will it do to say that men are bound to obey the law because God commands. It is quite apparent, as already shown, that submission to mere power can never constitute morality, even though the power be the greatest in the universe. To make the *mere* command of God the source and justification of obligation is, then, quite inadmissible. But, it must be acknowledged, that when, in popular religious teaching, duty is traced to the command of God, there is frequently an implicit acceptance of a deeper truth; for let the question be asked, Why does God command? and the usual answer will be, not that God's mere command is sufficient, but that God commands because it is right, or just, or in accordance with His goodness. That is, submission to God's authority is justified by reference to some assumed moral standard.

§ 4. Autonomy.

Kant's theory of obligation occupies an important position in the history of Ethics. With him, duty is the

highest ethical conception, superior to the idea of the good. Morality is obedience to the law. But how comes the law by its remarkable authority? What enables it to occupy this supreme position so that it stands above all justification? Kant replies that man has the faculty of Reason, and that Reason is itself the source of law. Man as Reason gives law to man as the subject[1] of desire. In the kingdom of morality, man is both king and subject.[1] This property by which man is a law to himself is called *Autonomy*. "The *Autonomy* of the will," says Kant, "is the sole principle of all moral laws, and of all duties which conform to them."[2] And again, "The moral law expresses nothing else than the *autonomy* of the pure, practical reason."[2] It is this principle of autonomy which gives to the moral law and the moral command the peculiar character which they possess. As the utterance of man's own Reason, the law needs not to justify itself by appealing to any higher authority, and so becomes an unconditional command, or, as Kant styled it, a "categorical imperative."

It would be unsuitable to enter in this place into a detailed examination of the Kantian Ethics. We have, however, seen good reason for disputing the doctrine that the *right*, that which conforms with law, is the fundamental ethical conception. At the same time, we cannot fail to find in Kant's doctrine of *Autonomy* the true solution of the problem of obligation, the true import of the imperative which is expressed by the moral "ought." Man as man (*i.e.* as self-conscious subject or Person) is a law to himself,

[1] In order to avoid confusion it is well to note the two uses of the word *Subject*.

[2] Dr. Abbott's *Kant's Theory of Ethics*, p. 122, 3rd ed.

because he is an end to himself. He seeks that which he conceives as *good for self*, an end with which he identifies himself. Autonomy is, then, as Kant points out, another word for Freedom. Man is a free agent, because he is self-determined, or, in other words, because he is determined by motives, by the ideas of ends with which he identifies himself. But these ideas are themselves due to the man's own activity. The self creates the ideas which determine self, and so legislates for self. Hence man is, in all his voluntary activity, autonomous or free.

§ 5. The Categorical Imperative.

But this seems to create difficulty for it fails to provide any means of distinction between acts. Man seems to be obeying the law of his nature, that law which he gives to himself, in all voluntary action as much as in that conduct which we recognise as distinctively moral, when he does wrong as well as when he does right. But this is precisely the conclusion at which we arrived long ago. Pure reference to self yields nothing but the empty form of the moral end, or of the moral imperative. Under the principle of autonomy man seeks a good as such, and hears the command, "Be good"; but the principle affords no method of determining what is the good which the man is to seek. And so we find that the word *ought* is used of any act when viewed with reference to its end. "Any being who is capable of putting before himself ideas as motives of conduct, who is capable of forming a conception of something which he would realise, is, by that very fact, capable of a sense of obligation." "Indeed, just as every judgment about existent fact naturally takes the form 'S is P,' so every judgment regarding an activity which executes an idea takes the form, 'S ought (or ought not) to be P.' . . . It is the very essence of theoretical judgment—judgment

regarding fact—to state truth—what is. And it is the very essence of practical judgment—judgment regarding deeds—to state that active relation which we call obligation, what *ought to be.* The judgment as to what a practical situation *is*, is an untrue or abstract judgment. The practical situation is itself an *activity;* the needs, powers, and circumstances which make it are moving on. At no instant in time is the scene quiescent. But the agent, in order to determine his course of action in view of the situation, has to *fix* it: he has to arrest its onward movement in order to tell what it is. So his abstracting intellect cuts a cross-section through its on-going, and says, 'This *is* the situation.' Now the judgment, 'This ought to be the situation,' or, 'In view of the situation, my conduct ought to be thus and so,' is simply restoring the movement which the mind has temporarily put out of sight. By means of its cross-section, intelligence has detected the principle, or law of movement, of the situation; and it is on the basis of this movement that conscience declares what ought to be."[1]

Thus there is no need of any "special mental faculty[2] which may declare what ought to be. The intelligence that is capable of declaring truth, or what is, is capable also of making known obligation; for obligation is only *practical* truth—the *is* of doing."[1]

This important examination (for which we are indebted to Professor Dewey) of the relation between the theoretical and practical judgments reveals very clearly the true

[1] Dewey, *op. cit.* pp. 192, 193, 194. See the whole of this valuable discussion.

[2] This, as pointed out by Professor Dewey, is not a criticism of Kant's doctrine of Reason, but of a common view of Conscience.

nature of obligation, or the "ought," showing that the moral judgment does not demand a special faculty, but is simply judgment upon activity, that is, upon movement to an end.

But, it may be said, this is to confuse the hypothetical imperative of mere skill with the categorical imperative of morality. The former says: This you ought to do, if you desire to attain a certain end. The latter commands: This you ought to do, for this is right. The one is conditional, the other is unconditional. But there is really no difficulty here. The whole difference resides in the mode in which the end is conceived. When the end is conceived as merely the satisfaction of some particular desire or interest, the imperative is hypothetical. When the end is conceived as the satisfaction of self, that is, as good for self, the imperative is categorical.

This doctrine of autonomy explains that strange mingling of bondage and dignity which we found to be characteristic of obligation or duty. Man is bound by the moral law, but he is bound, not as a slave by external compulsion, rather as a freeman, for he is self-bound. The very fact that he has a duty to do is the mark of his liberty.

§ 6. The Religious View of Obligation.

We have seen that duty is duty, because man is man. Obligation results from man's self-objectifying nature. But the religious consciousness of mankind traces duty to a source higher than man, and bows to the authority of the moral law with a reverence far deeper than could ever be given to self-legislation. Nor is this produced by the mere thought of God's superior power. Power can command fear, not reverence. The truth seems to be that though, in the sphere of action as well as in that of knowledge, self is ultimate for thought, yet man cannot help postulating his

own derivation from some transcendent source. He must trace himself, and all that is essentially his, to God. And so, though the sense of duty owes its very existence to this, that man is ultimate for himself, yet, because he traces himself to God, that which is the necessary consequence of his own essential nature must also be traced to God.

The justification of man's belief in his own derivation from some transcendent source is to be found, as we saw above,[1] in the fact that self is but one in a multitude of persons, and so, though self is ultimate for its own thought, it cannot believe itself to be the final unit of the universe of persons. A transcendent unit must be postulated. And this conclusion has its counterpart in the region of practice, for, if the good is in truth a common good, if, that is, the good is equally an end for all men, it must be by virtue of some principle which unifies the multiplicity of persons. But such a principle cannot be found in the self. It is only possible if the self be assumed to be derived from some transcendent source, the common origin and bond of union of all persons.

What the critical intelligence thus labours to express takes shape, for the ordinary intelligence, in such phrases as "The law of God written in men's hearts," and "The voice of God speaking through the human conscience." Such phrases, however highly symbolical they may be, give utterance to the very deepest truth of moral obligation. They refer the idea of duty to its origin in man's own nature, and again trace that nature, with all that is essential to it, to its origin in God. Hence the peculiar impressiveness and unique practical value of that religious view of morality which regards the moral law as God's law, and the voice

[1] Part i. chap. v.

of duty as the voice of God. This view is impressive, because it is the nearest possible approach to the truth; since God is for the religious consciousness not a great power, like a physical force, external to man, influencing man's life by pressure from without, but "the One" who touches man within in the depths of his own being, who is in man and in whom man is. This view is of unique practical value, because it teaches that the good is the good for God and is therefore absolutely worthy. It forces the individual to rise above the opposition between himself and his neighbour, and to regard the good as common. Why should a man sacrifice his desires for the sake of a common good? The religious view of morality answers the question at once: Because all are one in God, and the common good is the true good of every individual.

§ 7. Rights.

Closely connected with the idea of obligation is that of *rights* as distinguished from *the right*. The word *right* may signify either a quality of conduct, or a privilege possessed by man as a moral and social being. A right is, if it be a permissible expression, the other side of an obligation. If it is the duty of A not to kill B, it is the right of B not to be killed. The same fact may be stated either as an obligation on the part of A or as a right possessed by B. And so obligations and rights might be classified in parallel ranges of precisely corresponding terms. It is the duty of the individual to refrain from violence and murder, to be honest, truthful, pure, etc. On the other hand, every man has a right to life, to security of person and property, etc. Just as the list of duties might be extended indefinitely, so might the list of rights be extended. *Rights* and *obligations* are, in fact, correlative.

The fact that rights and obligations are thus intimately

connected leads to the conclusion that the rights of man have as important a reference to the ultimate end of conduct as the obligations. And this is so. If the community is to be realised in the realisation of its members, then the individual must have opportunities of development corresponding to his position in the community. Each member must have his due share of space wherein to develop. And so it happens that if the rights of a man be not respected, the sphere of his obligations will be correspondingly limited, and the value of his possible contribution to social welfare proportionately diminished. If, for instance, a man be deprived of life, he is deprived of opportunity to do his duty. If a man be robbed of his property, he can no more use his property in the way duty demands. Thus we discern a second correspondence between rights and obligations, and are led to see that the possession of rights is a source of obligation to their possessor. If a man has a right to live, he is, on the other hand, bound to use his life aright. If he has a right to his property, he is, at the same time, bound to use that property in the way which will contribute most to the common good.

In considering this question, it is important to distinguish between *moral* and *legal* obligation. When the language of *right* is applied to morality there is always a danger of importing legal ideas into moral discussions. *Morally*, rights and obligations are perfectly conterminous; *legally* they are not. It would be impossible, and, for ethical reasons, manifestly undesirable that the law should enforce the fulfilment of every obligation. The law, for instance, could not compel every one to use his property as he ought. Legally, he may, within limits, do what he likes with his own. Morally, he has a right to the secure enjoyment

of his property. Here the legal right and the moral right are conterminous. But the corresponding obligation (*i.e.* the obligation which rests upon the owner of the property) is moral and not legal. He cannot be forced, under penalty, to use his property so as to contribute, in the highest possible degree, to the common good.[1]

§ 8. Responsibility.

As the term *responsibility* seems to take its place in the vocabulary of *right*, as distinguished from that of *good*, it is well to discuss it here. We have examined the leading ideas which cluster round the legal view of morality, and have been able to discern their connexion with the moral end, and so to explain them. The idea of responsibility does not refuse to submit to a similar explanation.

Responsibility means literally answerableness, or accountability, the state of being required to give account as before some superior authority. We speak of a great responsibility, meaning the state of being in a position in which account must be given of great things. We say of one, "He was not responsible," meaning that his action was not voluntary, or that its consequences were not foreseen, and so he cannot be called to account. We say of another, "He is responsible," meaning that he acted voluntarily, and so must be prepared to give account of his conduct. Responsibility has therefore a very close connexion with the freedom of the will. If man were not a free agent, he could not be held responsible; and so the sense of responsibility has been held by some to be a sufficient basis for the doctrine of free will. As a matter of fact the sense of responsibility seems to be simply the recognition of freedom. A man feels himself responsible for his acts when he can

[1] On the whole subject of rights and their relations to obligations, see Mackenzie, *Manual of Ethics*, chap. x. §§ 4, 5, 6.

trace them to himself, and not to any source outside himself. If he acts instinctively, or without volition, he will deny his responsibility, for he will say that he cannot trace such an act to himself. It is only in so far as action is due to self-determination, as opposed to determination from without, that there is responsibility.

This explains the peculiar sting of self-reproach which accompanies the recognition of responsibility for some grievous fault. As the man looks within he traces the act to himself, and so regards himself with disapprobation. Hence the language of penitence is always expressive of self-accusation. And this self-reproach is intensified by the reflection that at the moment of choice different courses of action were open; the thought of what might have been, and cannot now be, adds a sense of irreparable loss to the sense of responsibility, and creates *remorse*.

It is also to be noted that the judgment upon self is a judgment upon character. It is because conduct is self-expression, the outcome of the man as he is at the moment, that the recognition of responsibility for some great fault is so painful. It is as if the man had got a glimpse into his own character and discovered its badness.

Although, then, the term *responsibility* belongs to the vocabulary of law, its true meaning is to be found only when conduct is regarded as owing its quality to the end to which it is directed. A man is responsible for his conduct only in so far as he is free or self-determined; but the very essence of freedom, or self-determination, is determination by motives, by the ideas of ends with which the man identifies himself. It is this identification of self with the end which makes conduct the expression of character, and justifies the idea of responsibility.

But if the tribunal before which a man has to answer for his misdeeds is merely his own self-consciousness, we seem to find ourselves at issue with the religious consciousness of mankind. There can be no doubt that the idea of responsibility, as ordinarily conceived, owes much of its impressiveness to the fact that men have learned to regard themselves as accountable to God. Is this view of responsibility correct or incorrect? The answer to this question must be precisely similar to the answer given to the corresponding question in the case of obligation. So far as consistent thought goes, man must be egoistic. He must refer himself to himself. But, as one in a multitude of persons, he cannot believe himself ultimate. He must look up to "One" who is transcendent and truly ultimate. When, therefore, man finds himself self-condemned for his fault, his belief in the dependence of his own nature impels him to accept the teaching of religion and recognise, in the voice of conscience, the voice of God. And he is justified in this belief when he discovers that his fault is a common evil, an evil in which other men are concerned as much as he. Common evil, as well as common good, demands, as its ground of justification, the existence of some Principle uniting, while transcending, the multitude of persons. And here again, it must be remarked, God is not conceived by the religious consciousness as a power imposing law from without, and demanding an account of conduct under the sanction of external force. God is the innermost truth of man's own being, and calls man to account through the instrumentality of man's own self-reference.

CHAPTER VIII

CONSCIENCE

§ 1. What is Conscience?

THE argument of the last chapter contains implicitly the account which must be given of the nature of conscience. The important analysis quoted from Professor Dewey shows that conscience is not, as some believe, a special faculty which is the source of obligation, and which, as its own distinct province, sits in judgment upon conduct, and pronounces the decisive "ought" of approval, or "ought not" of disapproval. Conscience is simply the consciousness of obligation.

§ 2. The Universal Conscience.

But, even when regarded as the consciousness of obligation, Conscience is a term which includes a very wide range of meaning.

In the first instance, it means the consciousness that there is such a thing as obligation. If it be asked, How is man aware of the distinction between *good* and *bad*, *right* and *wrong?* The common answer will be, Conscience tells him; and the answer is correct, when it is understood. The distinction between *good* and *bad* is, as we have seen, rooted in the very nature of man's self-presenting consciousness. In the very exercise of his characteristic activity as a free, or self-determining, agent, man seeks the *good* as his proper object, and, by seeking it,

implicitly distinguishes it from its opposite. But this does not afford any information further than this, that there is an end which is good, or, at least, that man assumes, owing to his very nature, that there is a radical distinction, as regards value for self, among the objects to which he may direct himself. So far conscience is primitive and universal.

§ 3. The Particular Conscience.

Secondly, the term Conscience is used to express the consciousness that certain kinds of conduct are obligatory. It is said to enjoin some acts and to forbid others. It is said to be enlightened or unenlightened. In this sense conscience is capable of education, either by the imparting of definite information as to what is right and what is wrong, or, more generally, through the effort of the man to take his place as a member in the social system, and so having to conform his conduct more or less perfectly to the principles which make the social system possible.

And so it happens that consciences can be classified according to the kinds of conduct which they sanction or refuse to sanction. Thus the Christian conscience can be distinguished from the Pagan, the modern from the mediæval. And thus conscience comes to belong, in a sense, to a social system or period rather than to the individual.

§ 4. The Sensitive Conscience.

Thirdly, the word Conscience is sometimes used with special reference to the feelings which adhere to the consciousness of obligation. So it is that we speak of a sensitive or tender conscience, or of a seared or hardened conscience. The recognition that an act is right or wrong is usually accompanied by an emotional element which is often very powerful, and which may be of the very highest practical importance. Upon this emotional element de-

pends the responsiveness[1] of conscience. But, while the emotional element is of immense value when it is attached to a conscience which is really enlightened, it may be productive of much evil if it is attached to an unenlightened conscience. The strong feeling which inspires the missionary devotion of an Apostle Paul gives momentum to the persecuting zeal of a Saul of Tarsus.

§ 5. Three Elements in one Whole.

But while the word Conscience is used with separate references to these three elements, and so seems to have three separate meanings, the truth is that conscience in the sense of consciousness of obligation is really one, because the three elements are found conjoined. Conscience in its actual exercise contains the conviction that there is such a thing as obligation, decides that this act, or this class of acts, is obligatory, and at the same time involves an element of feeling which may be more or less intense.

§ 6. The Individual Conscience.

The term Conscience is sometimes used to express the moral conviction of the individual as opposed to the opinions current in the society to which he belongs. The phrase "for conscience' sake" often refers to this special use of the term. Sometimes the individual finds himself in a position in which his private conviction forces him into open opposition to the law of his country. Such a position is one of great moral difficulty, and nothing but a profound sense of the authority of the individual conscience will enable an intelligent man to maintain it. And this belief in the authority of the individual conscience has been a mark of the heroes and martyrs of religious and social progress in all ages. We saw above[2] how it happens that, though the individual good is identical with the com-

[1] As pointed out by Professor Dewey, *op. cit.* p. 183.

[2] Part ii. chap. iv. § 9.

mon good, yet the individual sometimes finds himself at issue with the community, and we also saw how closely connected is this occasional conflict with the possibility of moral and social progress. Now it is in the conception of conscience as an individual possession that such conflict finds its justification. If the individual man were a mere member in an organism, the conflict would be without justification; but the man is primarily a self. In the fact of his self-hood lies the ground of his moral consciousness. He is aware of obligation, just because he is aware of himself. He knows there is a good, just because he knows he is. It is the self-presenting consciousness which makes conscience possible. Intelligence, whether in its speculative or in its practical exercise, is fundamentally egoistic. But while conscience owes its very existence to the self-hood of the individual, it gains its content by the identification of the individual good with the common good. How, then, is conflict possible? Evidently by some want of correspondence between the good as recognised by the individual, and the good as recognised by the opinion or law of the community. But this inconsistency does not present itself to the mind of the individual as a mere conflict of opinion; for him, it is conscience against the world. When the man finds himself driven into a corner by the adverse opinion of the community, he traces conscience up to its source in his own personality, finds there an ultimate authority, and, if he be strong, holds to what he conceives to be right, even though he have "to suffer for conscience' sake."

Of course he may be wrong. His conscience may be unenlightened, rather than enlightened. He may have made an intellectual mistake, and stupidly imagined an

inconsistency where there is none. He may have given an erring judgment; yet, if he cannot be brought to see his error, he clothes that judgment with all the majesty of his own autonomous personality, and, in the might of self-hood, faces an opposing world.

When the penetration of true genius is added to the determination to be true to the direction of conscience, there results the mind of the ethical reformer. The union of insight with the highest moral courage makes possible an *Athanasius contra mundum.*

There can be no doubt, however, that very often there is, in addition to regard for the dictation of conscience, a belief in the approval of God. And in such cases it is the conviction that, in some way or other, the voice of conscience is the voice of God which gives to the martyr for principle the sublime confidence which carries him through. Now, as we have seen, this conviction is the only possible justification of the assumption which conscience must make, if it is to be truly authoritative, viz. that the moral judgment has universal validity. On no other ground can good for self be identified with universal good.

§ 7. Moral Sense.

Conscience in its actual exercise may involve a greater or less degree of reflectiveness. It is obvious that as life proceeds and habits are formed the reference to conscience as conscience will, in most ordinary cases of moral conduct, drop out of sight, and the good will be done by what seems a kind of instinct. A truthful man, for instance, speaks the truth without pausing to consider that he is under an obligation to do so. In cases where there is some temptation to falsehood, where, that is, the man feels an inclination to gratify some strong desire by means of a

lie, reflectiveness will be aroused. But in most instances the truthful man will tell the truth without reflection. The art of life is, in fact, like any other art; practice enables the performer to do by a habit-taught skill what would otherwise take long thought and much painful, and perhaps hesitating, effort. Hence the idea of moral sense, or a faculty which enables the agent to do right without conscious reference to abstract rules of conduct, which is supposed to deal with each concrete situation as it occurs and to know the good by instinct. This supposed faculty has been termed sense, as opposed to understanding or reason (in the common use of that term), because it is thought to discern the good without reference to general laws. That it is no special faculty, but simply the skill produced by practice, is quite evident from this that it fails in cases of real difficulty. When a real difficulty occurs the agent is driven to reflection, and reflection in its first effort to solve the difficulty has always recourse to recognised rules.

It is not denied, of course, that there may be cases in which it is better to trust to moral sense than to any result which reflection can yield. Sometimes the effort to reason out the situation opens the way for self-sophistication, a very serious moral danger, and the wisest course may be to act on what seems the honest impulse of the heart. Hence the old rule, "In matters of right and wrong, think once; In matters of expediency, think as much as possible." But the distinction which is here made between the right and the expedient shows the limit of the rule. As we saw above,[1] the expedient is, in the only permissible sense of the term, a name for the good when it has to be determined by considering public welfare, because there is no moral law

[1] Part ii. chap. iv. § 4.

which seems to cover the circumstances. In other words, cases of expediency are cases of ethical difficulty of the most ordinary and typical sort. On the other hand, the advice, Think once, or, in other words, Follow the guidance of moral sense, is made specially applicable to cases of right and wrong. The meaning is then, obviously, that there are cases in which the right course is perfectly plain to any unbiassed mind, but in which there is present a strong inclination to go wrong, an inclination so strong as to influence the mind to practice deceit upon itself. In such cases the first clear intuition reveals the truth: reflection, if indulged in, becomes a means of self-sophistication. The advice is simply the old rule over again, Do not parley with sin.

The theory, therefore, which regards moral sense as a special faculty deciding the quality of conduct, and acting as the final court of appeal in all cases of difficulty, is one which cannot be maintained.

§ 8. Conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness ought to mean the habit of acting with due regard to conscience, so that the conscientious man would, in general, mean the good man. But this is not the meaning which the term usually bears. There is a certain amount of disagreement about the definition of conscientiousness among ethical writers, arising from a variation in the common use of the word. In ordinary language, the conscientious man means sometimes simply the just, or righteous, man; sometimes the man who is very careful to be exact in his conduct; sometimes the man who is painfully anxious in the examination of his motives. It would be impossible to enter, in this place, into a detailed criticism of the various views which correspond to these meanings. Let it suffice to say that it seems best to use

the word in the sense of the habit of care in the estimation of the circumstances of action. Judgment upon conduct depends upon the answer to the question, What are the circumstances of the case? The agent is responsible for the use which he makes of his intellect in determining these circumstances. The habit of hasty or inaccurate determination is one of the most injurious of bad habits. Conscientiousness is thus, though not another name for goodness, one of the chief characteristics of the good man; and that, not merely because decision depends upon the estimate which the mind makes of the circumstances of the case, but because to be careful in estimating the circumstances proves a character which is marked by the habit of recognising the supreme importance of the good.

And this view of the nature of conscientiousness affords a reasonable explanation of how it is possible to be "too conscientious." Scrutiny of the circumstances of each case as it arises may be made so painfully minute as to cause hesitation and want of decision. Anxiety to examine the case thoroughly may become so extreme that activity may be paralysed and the good left undone. Or again, trivial cases may be treated with the same scrupulous care as important cases, and the parts of life lose their proper relation to the whole, and the whole its symmetry. And so it may happen that what the healthily conscientious man would decide in a moment, the morbidly conscientious man may find too hard for decision.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUBORDINATION OF THE DESIRES

§ 1. Morality as the subordination of the Desires.

THE moral principle is, as we saw, a principle for the ordering of the desires and interests; and morality may, from one point of view, be said to consist in the due subordination of the desires. It may, then, be thought that, after all, the moral principle should take the form of some inner law of connexion, as regards relative importance, subsisting among the desires; that to be good must be to be guided by a higher desire in preference to a lower desire,[1] and that to classify the desires would be to solve the problem of Ethics. This view might seem to find its justification in the obvious fact that we sometimes speak as if the object of moral approbation or disapprobation were the desire or affection which prompts the act or seems to mark the character of the agent. We blame a man for being avaricious, we praise him for being benevolent. Sometimes, indeed, the moral judgment seems to be passed

[1] This is Dr. Martineau's view of Ethics. He recognises "*hierarchical gradations* of authority" as characteristic of the springs of conduct. "We are sensible," he says, "of a *graduated scale of excellence* among our natural principles." With him Conscience is "the sensibility of the mind to the gradations of this scale." Dr. Martineau seems to err through a confusion of psychology with metaphysics. See *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii. bk. i. chap. i.

upon the spring of conduct regarded as emotional. We condemn hatred. We approve charity. We say that love is "the fulfilling of the law."

The full discussion of the questions raised by this view of morality would lead into all the endless mazes of psychological analysis; and to no purpose. The fact is that the further such analysis is carried, the more distant does truth become, the mind losing itself in a world of abstractions. In the conscious life of man there is no such thing as a "mere affection," or a "mere emotion." These things are, in truth, unrealities, created by the mind by the process of abstraction. The full reality is *conduct*, the concretion of the man and the world, and the unit of conduct is the concrete act. Now, if the moral judgment is passed on the concrete act, the moral principle must be found, as we saw, in that which gives quality to the act, viz. in the end to which the man directs himself. It is only, then, in a derivative sense that any abstract element can be said to be good or bad, right or wrong. When therefore emotions, as love and pity, are approved, it is only because these emotions are the concomitants of classes of good acts. That this is so is evident from the fact that an act is not good because it is prompted by love or pity. Indeed, the presence of a so-called good emotion to the mind of an evil-doer may accentuate the evil of his doings. A man may *feel* love or pity very strongly as a sensational luxury, and not as a stimulus to action. But to feel pity, for example, for some case of great distress, and not to perform the act which relieves the distress, is to do wrong, and the evil is aggravated by the very fact that the "good" feeling is present. The mere abstract feeling is not, then, the true object of moral approbation, and it is only in a

derivative sense that mere feelings can be spoken of as good or bad.

But mere feeling is not desire. Desire, as it exists for a self-conscious agent, involves, in addition to feeling, the idea of an object by which the want can be satisfied, the idea of a possible end of conduct.[1] Desires can, then, be classified either according to the feelings which they involve, or the ends to which they are relative. Classification according to the feelings which they involve may have a psychological value, but, for the reasons just explained, can never yield an ethical principle. Classification by the ends to which they are relative is the very ethical principle we have adopted all along. That this may be clear let it be remembered that the end of a desire is not an external thing, but the corresponding activity. The classification of desires according to their ends does not, then, mean the formation of a list of desires arranged according to the supposed relative importance of a number of external things. When the end is found in the concrete act, the classification of the desires becomes simply the sub-ordination of them to that one end in which, under the circumstances, the self is to find its realisation. In activity, value for self is the supreme principle.

Thus the desires, as mere desires, are not intrinsically either moral or immoral. Or, to put the same truth in another form, the desires are all moral when in their place, and all immoral when unseasonably gratified.

§ 2. Relative Ethical Importance of the Desires.

At the same time, there are some which must be permitted to prevail more frequently than others in a moral life. Hence it is not incorrect to speak of some desires having a greater ethical value than others. Thus also it

[1] See part i. chap. iii. § 7.

would be possible to construct a rough table[1] of the desires, affections, and interests, according to their relative ethical value. And, because ethical value is identical with social value, inasmuch as the moral end is equally an end for all persons, it follows that the social value of a desire is in general the best clue to its importance.

If, then, there are any desires which are distinctly anti-social they may be said to be morally injurious, and ought always to be suppressed the moment they rise into consciousness. Such are the desires which correspond to the dispositions termed malevolence, vindictiveness, misanthropy.

On the other hand, desires which tend to social satisfactions have a high moral value. Such are the desires which may be indicated and grouped by means of the emotional terms Love, Friendship, Gratitude, etc.

Further, there are multitudes of desires which take their rise from regard to the laws, virtues, institutions of morality, and which are, in the main, of great ethical value. For example, the desires which spring from reverence for great institutions, patriotism, admiration for courage, truth, patience, heroism, etc.

Lastly, there is one interest, Devotion to the Good as such, which may be said to possess an absolute moral value, because it is never out of place. For the religious man, who traces morality to its source in God, Devotion to the Good becomes the Love of God.

This last instance is of importance, because in the most signal way it makes clear what we have just now seen reason to believe, that desires are only called good or

[1] This has been done by Dr. Martineau. See his *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii. bk. i.

bad in a derivative sense, that desire, as desire, is not intrinsically either good or bad. For, if any desire or interest could be intrinsically good, it is this Devotion to the Good. But it is most evidently possessed of ethical value, not in itself, but because it is relative to something else, because it is, not the Good, but Devotion *to* the Good.

§ 3. Confusion occasioned by words.

It is necessary, however, to have care to avoid the confusion which arises from the ambiguity and obscurity of language.

Sometimes judgment seems to be given upon desire as desire. We condemn the avaricious man, for instance. But this is, in truth, a judgment upon character and not upon desire. The avaricious man is the man who acts avariciously, and not the man who merely desires money. Suppose a man subject, through some inherited bent, to a strong passion for money, and yet habitually to overcome it: would such a man be condemned as avaricious? Evidently not. He would be praised as a moral hero. Character, as well as conduct, may be the object of moral judgment, because character is the inner side of conduct. But mere feeling, or mere desire, can never be either good or bad in any but a secondary and derivative sense.

In another way the ambiguity of language is a source of some difficulty. Terms which express feelings have a very wide range of application; and so the language of feeling is sometimes, and with great practical convenience, made to cover a whole activity. Thus love is said to be the fulfilling of the law. In strictness love, in its ethical sense, is the emotional concomitant of the will which identifies its good with the good of another. As a matter of fact, however, the emotional element may be very faint,

and there may still be the will which seeks its good in the common good. The faintness of the feeling of love does not affect the morality of the act. Love is, then, the fulfilling of the law only in that sense in which it means the will which finds its good in the good of others. The language of emotion is made to cover the whole activity. And this is a mode of speech which is sanctioned by custom and convenience. It appeals directly to the unreflective mind as no accurate philosophic statement could. But there is a deeper reason for its suitability. In the ideal character the emotional element must correspond to the constant habits of virtuous action; and, in proportion as any character approaches to the ideal, the emotional element, so far as it remains constant, tends to become permanently attached to the corresponding habit. Thus the name of the feeling becomes, for practical purposes, expressive of the ideal at which the agent who seeks to be good should aim.

Again, the language of feeling may be used to express character. In general, character and feeling tend to become coincident. The benevolent man, that is, the man who is in the habit of acting benevolently, is, as a rule, a man of benevolent feelings. The man who is in the habit of identifying his personal good with the good of others is, or will become, a man whose feeling towards others may be described as love (*caritas*, love in the ethical sense).

§ 4. The Interests in Science and Art.

The relation of science and art to Ethics has been found a difficulty by some ethical writers. But the problem does not seem to be as difficult as it has been thought. The interest in science and the interest in art must take their places among the other desires and interests which, taken all together, provide the feast of life, the sum total of

man's possibilities. Each desire or interest has its due place in the man's life, and should be gratified according to his circumstances. All must be subject to the one supreme ethical principle, self-realisation in a common good. But this subordination to the ethical principle does not mean that the end (*i.e.* the act) which corresponds to each desire, or interest, is to be sought as a means to a further end. The proximate end is, in every case, the good in itself, and should be sought for its own sake, as the good of the case. The difficulty seems to arise from forgetfulness of the fact that the good is perfectly individualised. It is a man's duty to eat his dinner, but he seeks the end to which his hunger leads him, not as a means to some more distant duty, but because it is under the circumstances his good, the end in which he rests. If any moralist were to assert that it is immoral for a man to eat his dinner unless, in doing so, he consciously seeks for strength by which to do his duty to society, the absurdity of the contention would be manifest. But when it is contended that the doctrine which identifies the moral end with social or common good makes it appear that "those only who in the studio or laboratory are consciously seeking the good of society or humanity are worthy artists or truth-seekers,"[1] the absurdity is not so evident. Mr. Muirhead[1] points out that "it is notoriously the case that the condition of the highest achievement in either field is that truth and beauty should be pursued for their own sakes, and not on account of any ulterior object." But this is not peculiar to truth and beauty. It is so with every end which is adopted as the good. The proximate good is that which under the circumstances realises the self of the agent, and is, at the

[1] See Muirhead, *op. cit.* p. 187, 188.

same time, to the extent which the circumstances permit, the realisation of all selves. It is not necessary for the moral man to look further. Indeed it is a sign of moral health, and the best way to do well whatever has to be done, not to look further, but, for the time being, to seek the immediate end as if it were ultimate.

But, it may be said, there is still a difficulty. To keep the ultimate end in view should always have an ennobling effect upon the mind of the worker. Now it is not so with the artist or man of science, if the ultimate end is simply social welfare. Art and science are best pursued by those who never think whether their productions will assist education, or their discoveries contribute to the cure of disease. The true artist works for art's sake, and the true man of science works for knowledge' sake, and neither artist nor man of science works for the good of humanity.

But this difficulty only springs from the limited meaning which the phrase "good of humanity" has acquired. It is, no doubt, true that art and science are not assisted by any thought of a possible philanthropic application of their results. But the "common good," regarded as the ultimate end, is no mere philanthropic idea. It is the thought, as we saw, of an absolutely valuable end, a social order in which every person shall find realisation. Such an idea could not but have an ennobling effect upon any one, artist or artizan, who worked with it in view. While, then, it is true that every man should in the actual work of life seek the proximate end as, under the circumstances, the good in itself, the recognition that there is an ultimate end, which, to the unphilosophic mind, can scarcely take any form but that of an indefinite something regarded as absolutely valuable, cannot fail to have the effect of stimu-

lating effort, eliciting hope, and ennobling the life. Thus is it possible for ordinary men to look beyond the present in a way which is not unworthy of being regarded as a following of the apostolic injunction to "do all to the glory of God."

But there is a consideration which lifts the interests in science and art to a very high place in that scale of relative ethical value which must be accorded to the desires and interests. As moralisation proceeds intellectual and æsthetic interests fill a gradually enlarging space in the whole field of human possibilities. And this is a necessary consequence of the essential nature of manhood. As a self-conscious agent man reaches his fullest self-expression in volition. In will self is actual to the fullest extent. But will involves knowledge. Before a conscious agent directs himself to an end, he must form an idea of the end. The will to know is involved in the will to do. Now, as moralisation proceeds and social organisation increases in complexity, the will to know finds itself confronted with problems of ever-increasing complication, and the interest in science finds an ever-enlarging field of operation. Thus knowledge for knowledge' sake comes to be more and more an object of interest. Nor does it take away from the importance of the interest in science to discover that, historically, it took its rise from practical needs. It is mere matter of fact that science had its origin in the effort to solve practical difficulties.

A comparison of ancient with modern civilisation helps to make the truth of this contention clearer. In spite of the amazing intellectual acuteness of the Greek mind, so far surpassing, in its high level of average intelligence, anything which the modern world has seen, the complexity of

modern life and the consequent specialisation of the function of the individual have occasioned a variety of scientific interest which no degree of ability or insight would have made possible under the simpler conditions of ancient society. The eye of the modern student can discern whole galaxies of sciences which not even the keen intellectual vision of an Aristotle could have enabled an ancient philosopher to detect. Nor is this simply because knowledge is, in a sort, an accumulation. Many of our modern sciences are so closely connected with the differentiation of social function that they could have no meaning to a mind unfamiliar with the social system to which they correspond.

It would be impossible to enter here into the philosophy of æsthetics, or even to endeavour to indicate briefly the mode in which art takes its place in the whole of life. Nor is it necessary to attempt either task. It is quite sufficient for our purpose to point out that, since there must be some correspondence between art and life, every increase in the complexity of social arrangements gives rise to new possibilities of artistic creation. Thus the process of moralisation involves an ever-widening field for the exercise of æsthetic interests.

The moral progress of mankind involves, then, the gradual opening out of larger spaces of life for the exercise of the interests in science and art. And whenever circumstances are so disposed that the good of the case consists in the knowing of scientific truth, or the producing or enjoying of some artistic creation, there is knowledge for knowledge' sake, or art for art's sake. But, in moments of reflection, the man of science or the artist can rise superior to the proximate end of his action, and can contemplate his

science or his art as an element in a great system which is relative to an end whose worth is absolute. To make science and art ends in themselves in any other sense than this, would be, not to enhance, but to destroy them. Cut off from the whole of life they have neither value nor meaning.

These considerations are of some importance. Neither science nor art can claim to be independent of Ethics. The world of art is not to be regarded as a world in which the writ of the moral imperative does not run. The ethical principle exacts obedience throughout the whole domain of life. It can never be permissible to create a world of imagination within the real world, and there renounce allegiance to morality, and revel in the breach of the law. The sway of the good must be wide as man's activity.

CHAPTER X

VIRTUE AND THE VIRTUES

§ 1. What is Virtue?

WHAT is virtue? Socrates held it to be a kind of knowledge. No person, according to him, ever does wrong willingly. If a man knows the good, he will choose nothing else. And there is much to be said for this view. The doctrine of the good, as adopted above, seems to lead to it directly. If the object of the will is always the good, or what is conceived as such, the good being thus identified with that which satisfies self, then it seems to follow inevitably that the correctness of the choice depends upon the ability to conceive the good correctly. If a man has knowledge sufficient he will always conceive the good correctly, and so choose as he ought.

This strange paradox has been the cause of much perplexity, for it seems to destroy morality. If sin is ignorance, how can any one be held responsible? If every man is, as a matter of fact, good so far as his knowledge extends, why should any man be blamed? Further, the doctrine seems contrary to fact. The moral situation represented by the line, "video meliora proboque: deteriora sequor," seems to be a not infrequent experience in human life. Yet it implies that the knowledge of the good is con-

sistent with the doing of the evil; and therefore plainly contradicts the Socratic doctrine.

Further examination seems to show that the idea of the good, which forms the motive of action, may not correspond with the speculative knowledge possessed by the agent. When a man sets himself in a "cool hour" of reflection to the speculative determination of "his good," he may arrive at very clear and definite ideas of what he ought to do. But it does not at all follow that what he recognises as his good in a moment of calm reflection will appear as the good in the hurry of action, or when passion is strong. The arm that will strike the quick, unerring blow amid the whirl and rush of the battlefield is not the arm of him who has thoroughly mastered the *science* of the sword, and who knows the rules by rote. The true stroke will be struck by him who has practised the *art* in mimic or real battle, and so acquired the habits of eye and of muscle which will make his speculative knowledge instantly available. Virtue, then, being the fitness of man to attain his proper end, can consist in nothing else than the possession of certain habits. Hence results the Aristotelian definition: "Virtue is a habit of choice." [1]

The Aristotelian definition is most certainly the true one. But, though common sense and the facts of experience compel this conclusion, it is not at all obvious how the Socratic paradox is to be explained.

§ 2. A more searching Investigation of the nature of Virtue becomes necessary.

A more searching investigation of the nature of virtue becomes necessary. We have seen that virtue is the fitness of man to attain his proper end. Now, the end of man is not anything external to man himself, it is the very activity which he displays. The end, or good, of man is *man doing*,

[1] ἕξις προαιρετική, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ii. vi. 15.

the concretion of man and the world. This concrete activity is the only thing which can be called *good* in itself. Regarded from the inner side, it is the man willing, or the good will. Regarded from the outer side, it is the good deed.

But this distinction between the good will and the good deed is precisely parallel to the distinction between character and conduct. The act of will (good or bad) is the man's self-expression, the out-going of his character as it is at the moment. The fitness of a man to attain his proper end depends, then, upon what his character is, that is, upon what he himself is. Now, what he is arises out of what he has been. The voluntary life of a self-presenting agent is, as we have seen, a process of self-development. Will is self-evolution.

Here then we seem to detect the error of the Socratic paradox. To separate any one element (as, for example, knowledge) from the whole of man's self-hood, and identify the fitness of man to attain his end with the perfection of that one element to the exclusion of all other elements, is to fall into precisely the same kind of error as that which entraps those who say that conduct is determined by feeling.[1] The latter isolate the element of feeling, and say conduct results from the feeling which is dominant at the moment of choice. The Socratic isolates knowledge, and says: No man who knows the good commits the evil. The error of the Socratic is not, however, so great as the error which makes feeling the determinant of conduct, because knowledge is much nearer to the whole of human activity than is the element of feeling; and, further, because there is a sense in which man as a knowing agent is free.

Virtue, then, belongs to man, not merely as knowing

[1] See Mr. Leslie Stephen's *Science of Ethics*, chap. ii. § 11.

subject, but to man in all the fulness of his self-hood. Virtue belongs, that is, to man as a self-determining or willing agent; for will, as we saw, is the man as he is, in a way that knowledge is not. And what the man is in any act depends on what he has been *plus* the present determination of his will. His fitness, then, to act aright upon any occasion, (so far as that fitness is other than his power of self-determination at the moment) consists in the series of past acts which have led up to the occasion; in other words, his virtue, if he have any, consists in his habit of choice.

Even the idea of the good which he forms under any given circumstances is not a matter of pure knowledge. Its formation takes place within limits which are fixed by the desires and interests which represent the man's possibilities. But these desires and interests depend, to a very large extent, upon the habits which the man has previously formed. Now the circumstances of any particular concrete instance are altogether different from the ideal conditions which the man represents to himself when he sits down in a calm hour to meditate upon what he ought to do. Here he is living in an abstract world in which knowledge is a much larger element, proportionately to the whole, than it is in the actual world. He sees what ought to be done, but he omits circumstances which may alter his whole point of view when the time of action comes. When the time of action comes the full reality of the man's character (or Will) asserts itself. He puts himself forth, not in the manner which he approved in the time of abstract contemplation, but according to the way in which he brings his whole past life to bear upon the new circumstances.

Thus the vice of the Socratic paradox is simply the old vice of confounding the abstract with the concrete.[1]

Any effort to express the truth concerning the concrete in words is open to the danger of admitting the old error in some new form. The language just employed concerning the relation of the past life to any particular act is open to this danger in two especial ways. There is danger lest the whole process by which character reacts upon circumstances may seem a process of natural necessity. To avoid this let the methods and results of our discussion of the Will be kept well in view, let it be remembered that self is presupposed in every stage of the process, and the whole will then be seen to be a process of self-evolution, and therefore of freedom as opposed to natural necessity. Again, there is danger lest character should be regarded as a fixed quantity. The concrete activity is always in motion. The statical view of character is simply an imaginary arresting of the movement of the self at any moment in its self-evolution for the purpose of determining its nature; but it is, in truth, like seeking for life by examining a dead carcase. In the very act of turning back upon one stage of its experience self has moved on, and in the very act of movement, the one thing which cannot be arrested, resides

[1] It may seem that there is still a difficulty. The Socratic paradox asserts that no man is willingly evil. In a sense the assertion is correct. The end is always conceived as good at the moment of choice. No man chooses evil regarding it as evil. He chooses it as *his* good. The very essence of badness is a character or will which is so set that it finds its good in that which in moments of calm reflection the mind recognises as evil. There is a want of correspondence between the character and the abstract knowledge which the mind possesses. The Socratic error consists in assuming that the correspondence must be complete, making mere knowing to be the essence of self-hood.

its essential life. It is this self, which always remains in the background, which is truly free. Hence when freedom is subjected to examination it appears to be necessity.

§ 3. In what sense Virtue is Habit.

Now it is evident from all this that, though virtue is habit, it is not habit in the sense in which skill is habit. Though virtue is the fitness of man to attain his proper end, it is not mere capacity, even though that capacity be the result of past conduct. And with this common sense agrees. The virtuous man is not the man who *can* be good when he likes, he is the man who *is* good, *i.e.* who *does* good. Virtue is *activity*. Hence the parallel which we drew between the skilful swordsman and the virtuous man is not quite exact. It is like the parallels which the ancients so often drew between the virtues and the arts; it expresses a part of the truth, but not the whole.

Virtue, then, in the fullest and most exact sense of the term, is *the virtuous will in action*, and, in this sense, virtue is only another name for the "good will." It is the good will generalised. And this is the only sense in which virtue can be said to be good in itself. Here virtue is *quality of character*, but it is character regarded as dynamical, or in action.

It is very hard to maintain this view of character. When the word character is used there is a constant tendency to fall back upon the statical view of its nature. Hence there is a very great danger of misunderstanding, when virtue is made to be itself the good, or when the ethical end is said to be perfection of character. When properly understood, both these modes of expression are correct. They simply look at the good from the inner side and express in words corresponding to that point of view the truth which, from the other point of view, is

described as self-realising activity. At the same time, if the good is constantly described as personal perfection, the less careful reader is very likely to make the mistake of imagining that this personal perfection is a subjective condition instead of an objective activity. Readers of Professor T. H. Green's great ethical work sometimes find it almost impossible to get rid of this impression.[1] The moral tendency is, of course, injurious. If a man begins to seek for perfection "in his own breast," instead of in his conduct, the consequence is the subversion of all true morality. Further, when personal perfection, viewed as a subjective condition, is regarded as the ultimate end of conduct, the tendency is to selfishness. The fact that the good is good for all drops out of sight.

Those forms of expression, then, which emphasise the objective nature of the good are those which tend most to the cultivation of a healthy moral tone. When the good is thought of as activity, or as the realisation of self in a social order which realises all persons, there is no danger either of morbid introspection or of preoccupation with self to the exclusion of the other-regarding aspect of morality.

At the same time, the view of the good which regards it as virtue or good character must not be omitted. For this view has a peculiar value of its own. Thus the good acts of others are seen to have a depth of meaning which could not belong to them if they were not the expression of character. And further, when goodness and badness are regarded as virtue and the opposite, the identification of the former with self is the true meaning of the peculiar happiness of virtue, and the identification of the latter with

[1] See *Prolegomena to Ethics*, book iii. chaps. iv. and v.

self is the true meaning of that self-condemnation which characterises the mind which has been awakened to the recognition of its own moral imperfection.

§ 4. The Unity of Virtue.

Strictly speaking, there is but one virtue: the habit of choosing the good; or, in other words, the habitual will to subordinate all desire to the true good. But, just as the one supreme imperative of morality finds partial expression in many commandments, so the one virtue finds its partial embodiment in the virtues.

The virtues ought, therefore, to form a perfect system, and that they tend to do so is evident from this, that it is impossible to disconnect them. Thus, courage and self-control are connected; for courage is the virtue which resists the fear of pain, and self-control the virtue which overcomes the temptations of pleasure, and many pleasures are but the absence of pains, and many pains are but the loss of pleasures. Again, consider justice and benevolence and, though they are frequently contrasted and opposed, it will be found that the one tends to pass into the other, and that it is impossible to define one without in some degree including the other.

But, though the virtues must form a correlated system, it would be impossible to map out such a system in a complete manner; for, just as it is impossible to give a detailed account of the content of the ultimate end, so, on the side of character, it is impossible to give a complete analysis of virtue made perfect. Man is not yet what he has it in him to be.

§ 5. The Classification of the Virtues.

Many efforts have been made to classify the virtues, but no list ever formed can be considered perfectly satisfactory. The truth is, that owing to the inner connexions of the virtues it seems to be impossible, without introducing

artificial restrictions of meaning, to make a really unobjectionable division of them. Thus even the famous Platonic list—Wisdom (practical wisdom), Courage, Temperance (self-control), and Justice—is not above criticism. Wisdom includes all the rest. Justice is the common name for all social virtues.

Aristotle, considering that the good action always stands between two extremes of which one errs by excess and the other by defect, regarded virtue as the habit of choosing the mean. Guided by this principle he drew up a list of virtues which, however great its interest and value, is not of the same universal importance as the Platonic list. Side by side with the great virtues of Courage and Self-mastery, he places such virtues as Liberality and Urbanity (*εὐτραπελία* in its good sense). The truth is, his list is almost altogether relative to the social conditions of Greek life, and is not easily adapted to the conditions of modern society. Indeed the greater ease with which the Platonic list can be adapted to the circumstances of modern life is due to its greater simplicity, and the consequently greater possibility of reading into it meanings and applications which never entered the ancient Greek mind.

The Aristotelian catalogue of virtues well serves to teach the important lesson that the forms of goodness are very closely connected with social institutions. And none can learn this lesson and then contemplate the formation of a modern list of virtues without being puzzled by the extraordinary complexity of modern life, and the difficulties which would arise therefrom. If the attempt were made to draw up a fairly complete list of virtues to suit the present condition of society, it would be scarcely possible to avoid making a distinction between primary virtues, virtues covering a wide

range of cognate characteristics, and secondary or derivative virtues which would be included in corresponding groups under the primary virtues. Only in this way would it be possible to avoid illogical division. Thus, if Benevolence were classed as a primary virtue, the secondary virtues grouped under the head of Benevolence would include philanthropy, patriotism, and perhaps courtesy. Though here a question would arise as to whether courtesy, benevolence in little things, should be put side by side with the splendid virtues of patriotism and philanthropy, and not made a member of a tertiary group of minor virtues. So that here, as everywhere, the difficulty of appropriate division crosses the path.

It would be impossible to enter into a discussion of this complicated question. Nor is it necessary to do so. It will suffice to point out that the Platonic list is still accepted as about the best general classification of the primary (or Cardinal) virtues. Modern requirements, however, seem to find this list deficient in two main particulars: first, Justice seems too narrow a term to include all social virtues; and, secondly, no place can be found for those (for the modern man) most important characteristics which may, perhaps, be best grouped under the head of Perseverance. The list then becomes: Prudence, Temperance, Courage, Perseverance,[1] Justice, Benevolence. The first four more immediately concern the good regarded as duty to self; the last two more immediately concern the good when regarded as duty to others.

It is possible to find many faults with this list. Prudence can be extended so as to include all the rest. It then becomes practical wisdom, which, in the only sense in

[1] Following Mr. Mackenzie. See *Manual of Ethics*, p. 223.

which it can be a virtue, is merely another name for virtue in general. Again, Justice and Benevolence may, perhaps most reasonably, be regarded as two different aspects of the same virtue, or, as already pointed out, of the same large class of virtues. Justice is the habit of regarding the rights of others. Benevolence is the habit of regarding the welfare of others. One is legal, the other is based upon the idea of the good. The necessity of mentioning the two arises from the fact that to omit one, without clearly showing by an array of subdivisions how all that is characteristically benevolent can be included in justice, or all that is characteristically just can be included in benevolence, would make the list of primary virtues incomplete. It is well to note that justice includes both honesty and truthfulness. Perseverance has been included,[1] because the extraordinary stress of modern social conditions has raised it to a position of first-rate importance. If the moral man is, in the first instance, the man who adequately fills his proper place in the social system, then perseverance is as essential to the modern man as courage was to the ancient.

The importance of constructing a detailed list is not so great as it seems. Such a list, at its best, can only be a reflection of the received ideal imperfectly systematised.[2] What is of the utmost ethical importance is the cultivation of a virtuous will, that is, a will habituated to subordinate desire of every kind to the true good whatever it may be.

[1] Following Mr. Mackenzie. See *Manual of Ethics*, p. 223.

[2] Mr. Muirhead (*op. cit.* pp. 186, 187) gives an interesting synopsis of the Virtues as seen from a thoroughly modern standpoint. As with all other efforts of the sort, the difficulty of a logical division seems insuperable.

Such a will possesses the one supreme virtue, and in possessing it possesses all.

§ 6. The Religious Aspect of Virtue.

The religious aspect of virtue claims attention. It may seem, on a hasty survey, that religion adds a new class to the list of virtues. But this is a mistake. Virtue, so far as it is virtue, is moral. Religion glorifies it with a new general character, throws fresh light upon it, exalts it by tracing the good to its ultimate meaning, but does not swell the list by a new class of virtues. It is not meant, of course, that religion has never acted as a moral teacher. That would be a serious error. But when religion has made a new kind of character (*e.g.* humility) lovely in the eyes of men, and so given it a place among the virtues, the result is, not the placing of a religious virtue over against the moral virtues, but the adding of one to the already recognised number of the moral virtues. Religion is thus a moral teacher in the sense of awakening the human mind to perceive moral beauty where it was never perceived before, but not in the sense of inventing a class of virtues distinguished as religious rather than moral.

Religion has, however, a higher office with regard to virtue than that of being a moral teacher in the sense just explained. It presents virtue in a new light. To the religious man all virtue becomes piety, the habit of will which chooses the good as that which is, for the very highest reason, the best. And so the Christian virtues, Faith, Hope, Love, so far as these terms are used to express habits of conduct, seem to be names for virtue in general regarded in different ways. Each of them may, in turn, be made to include the whole of a virtuous life. Their true meaning is to be sought in the way in which each of them throws some special light upon the life of virtue. One

regards virtue as the outcome of conviction, another as having reference to a great future, the third as being the character which finds its good in the good of others.

But religion has another and most important office—it yields a standard of virtue. We have seen that virtue is the good expressed in terms of character, as contrasted with conduct, and that the standard thus becomes Perfection of character, as contrasted with a standard which consists in the idea of an ultimate end. But perfection of character seems, and indeed is, as remote and indefinable as the idea of a great far-off event or state of things. The ethical importance of the ideal character is to be found, not in its being in any way more capable of exact definition, but in the fact that it actually is. The Ideal of virtue is God Himself.[1]

[1] There can be no doubt that one reason of the immense ethical value of Christianity is, that, in the Person of its great Founder, it brought the Ideal character into close relationship with human life. To Christians, their Master is not a mere moral teacher, He is the incarnation of the Ideal. Hence the enormous moral influence of the short story of His life.

CHAPTER XI

THE ETHICAL STRUGGLE

§ 1. Goodness and Self-denial.

Goodness, using the word in its special sense, is a wider term than virtue. There is an old paradox, "Where there is self-denial there is no virtue." The meaning is plain. Virtue is the habit of choosing the good. If this habit be supposed fully formed, it is obvious that a state must be reached in which the good is chosen quite easily, without struggle, without self-denial. The ideally virtuous man is one who has never to deny himself, for his constant tendency is to choose the good in every case. Self-denial [1] is, then, not to be counted as one of the virtues. It is a necessary element in every virtuous life, because it is one of the principal conditions of

[1] Self-denial is to be distinguished from Self-control (Temperance). It must be remembered that virtue is essentially positive. It is the habitual determination to do the good. Ideally, it is the character-side of the ultimate, the will which posits the *summum bonum*. But every process involves an opposition of positive and negative. And so virtue, in the forms which it assumes relatively to the process of moralisation, has to be regarded, not only as the affirmation of the good, but also as the negation of the evil. Accordingly, it is sometimes necessary to define the virtues (*e.g.* Courage and Temperance) by reference to the opposites which they overcome. At the same time, virtue is, in its essence, positive. Now, the essence of self-denial is negative. It belongs altogether to the process of moralisation, and cannot enter into the end of the process.

the formation of virtue. But it is not itself virtue. There would be a very obvious impropriety in counting among the virtues a quality which must vanish as virtue tends to perfection.

But goodness includes self-denial. When we contemplate the life of any one who did his duty in spite of very strong temptation, or who made great sacrifices for the sake of a good cause, we regard him with the very greatest admiration for his goodness. A man who was able from right motives to do a similar duty, or to give equal assistance to the same good cause, without encountering any temptation or making any sacrifice, would be quite as virtuous; but his conduct would not stir the same feelings of admiration, nor should we, with the same emphasis, call him good or great. And if it be asked, Why self-denial should call for such special recognition? the answer must be, that a will which is capable of self-denial is one which contains the potentiality of the very highest virtue. Self-denial is not itself virtue, but it is that which, in a being who is the subject of desire, makes all the virtues possible. The process by which the virtuous will is made perfect is the continual subordinating of the desires as they arise to the true good, and sometimes this subordination becomes a matter of the greatest difficulty. There are strong desires which rend the soul by the mere strength of the emotions which they command, and the man who is unable to overcome them and choose the good in spite of them can never be virtuous. Self-denial means the denial of these strong desires. It is thus essential to the formation of a virtuous character.

§ 2. Goodness involves Struggle.

Thus goodness involves a life in which there is more or less struggle. And this is evident in general, quite apart

from the fact that there are desires so strong that the denial of them has to be called self-denial; for good conduct requires the incessant postponing of desires, weak as well as strong, to the good. It is impossible for the moral man to stand still, to reach a certain level of goodness and rest content with it. To rest content with past attainments is to fall. To cease to ascend is to begin to descend; for activity is of the essence of spiritual existence. The moral situation changes momently, and every new development makes a fresh call upon the moral resources. Every group of circumstances has its good, and demands the will which is necessary to make that good actual. In many cases —perhaps in most cases—there is no consciousness of struggle, for the institutions of society and the routine of life place duty before us so systematically that we become habituated to perform it without question or murmur. But, though this is true of most of our ordinary acts, scarcely an hour passes without the occurrence of cases in which a certain amount of struggle has to take place; various desires press their conflicting claims, and choice has to be made. The struggle may be so slight as to be almost imperceptible, or it may be great enough to cause physical pain, as well as deep mental anxiety. But, whether the struggle be great or not, it is these moments in which it occurs which form the character. The presence of struggle marks the moral ascent or descent of the soul. Now if, in these moments, there are present the conviction that there is a true good other than the mere satisfaction of the desires as they arise, and the resolution to choose that good, no matter what it costs, there is the very temper of goodness. Goodness is the "effort to be better" continually exerted in the struggle of life. It involves the

looking up to a good which is ever overhead, and the constant striving to attain it. Goodness is virtue in the making.

This distinction between goodness and virtue may seem an artificial one; but it is sanctioned by the fact that goodness must be made to include self-denial, and it has the further advantage of bringing out very clearly the nature of the advance, through conflict, towards moral perfection.

§ 3. Merit.

The idea of *Merit*, or *Desert*, is one which must be placed side by side with that of goodness. Merit is sometimes supposed to connote an excess of performance over duty. Obligation, it is thought, demands a certain measure of doing; do more than this, and merit accrues. This view seems to find some justification in the idea of duty as a debt—that which is due. If a man pays more than he owes, his work is meritorious. But this cannot be maintained. The idea of debt is not a perfect parallel to moral obligation in general, nor, even if it were, would it be in most cases meritorious to pay more than is due. It is, in truth, impossible to do more than is commanded, for in every case the best is commanded. Each case has its good, and anything over the mark or under the mark is a failure in duty.

Is there, then, no such thing as merit? Is the very idea illusive? From the subjective point of view, it seems the answer must be affirmative. No one has a right to regard himself or his conduct as meritorious. When we have done all that is commanded, we are still unprofitable servants. We have merely done our duty. But, while this should be the mind of the agent as respects his own good works, it should not be the mind of others towards him,

His work has a social value, and the idea of merit seems to be expressive of that value. The recognition of merit takes the form of reward, and it is a sign of a widespread spirit of justice when real merit meets with appropriate reward.

Merit takes account of more than the morality of conduct. It frequently includes reference to the circumstances of an act, the amount of self-denial which accompanies it, or its immediate social importance. It is meritorious to help the miserable; but it is still more meritorious when, in order to help the miserable, the philanthropist voluntarily leaves the comforts of civilisation behind him and shares the squalid life of the miserable. It is meritorious to find means to cure disease; but it is still more meritorious if the disease be one so deadly as to threaten the welfare of society.[1]

§ 4. Badness.

The Bad, like the Good, may be regarded from two points of view, the inner and the outer. There is bad character as well as bad conduct, the evil will as well as the evil deed.

The evil deed is, in the widest sense, the act which misses the mark, which results from the choice of that which is not the good of the case. In many instances, the evil deed does not seem very evil. The circumstances are, relatively to the whole of life, trivial; or no clear command or moral rule applies, and there is difficulty in knowing what the good of the case is. In such cases we attach but slight blame to the faulty action. We are even inclined to think no harm has been done. But in some cases great issues are depending, or some clear, unmistak-

[1] This brief account of merit is, for the most part, derived from Prof. Dewey's discussion, *Outlines of Ethics*, p. 225.

able moral rule covers the circumstances. Then, if the evil deed is committed, we visit the offence with strong disapprobation. In the language of ethics, we call it *bad* or *wrong* or a *fault*. In the language of religion we call it a *sin*.[1] If the fault is an offence against society recognised by national law, and by law entailing punishment, it is termed *crime*.

Where no recognised moral rule applies to the case, and the agent has conscientiously endeavoured to find out the good and failed, it is impossible to find just fault with him. The reason is, of course, that the badness, as well as the goodness, of conduct depends upon the motive. The outer side of conduct is inseparable from the inner.

When badness is examined from the inner side as the bad will or, more generally, the bad character, it seems to resolve itself into a want of correspondence between the amount of ethical enlightenment which the mind possesses speculatively and the actual choice of the will. As we have seen, the object of the will is always conceived as the good. The end of every act is sought *sub specie boni*. But the good which the mind acknowledges in moments of calm reflection is not always the good which the will chooses when the moment of action comes. Now it is this latter good which is the true result of character. The concrete act expresses the man as he is. The good as it appears in the time of reflection is not the good which corresponds to the man's character as it is, but as he knows it ought to be. It is this want of correspondence which condemns the man.

That this is so is evident from the consideration that if a man were to commit the most horrible offences, and yet

[1] See part ii. chap. v. § 6.

were to be in perfect ignorance of the evil of his doings, and further, if it be assumed that he never had any knowledge which would have enabled him to know them in their true nature, he could not be an object of moral censure. He might call forth loathing or abhorrence. He might be punished with a view to awaken a possible conscience. He might be restrained to prevent harm to others. But he would not be morally culpable.

Badness, then, implies either a present speculative knowledge of better things, or the former possession of knowledge which, if rightly used, would have resulted in a present speculative knowledge of better things.

Badness of character takes certain forms which may be termed vice, lawlessness and selfishness.

§ 5. Vice.

Vice is the opposite of virtue. It is a settled habit of choosing the bad. Sometimes it takes the form of the habitual gratification of some particular desire which is not evil in itself. The evil resides in unseasonable gratification, and in the abnormal force which this unseasonable gratification, when constantly indulged, gives to the desire. Vice is like its opposite virtue in this that it involves the subordination of the desires as they arise, not however to the good, as with virtue, but to the gratification of one over-mastering passion. The avaricious man or the drunkard may be as consistent as the good man, for he may become so absorbed in the indulgence of one desire as to sacrifice all other interests to it. But the desire is not evil in itself. The desires for money, for drink, and for sexual gratification have, within proper limits, their place in the economy of man's nature. But when indulged out of season and, above all, when constantly indulged out of season, they become the instruments of vice.

There are, however, some desires which are altogether abnormal, which should have no place in human life. Thus the habitual drunkard comes to desire, not drink, but drunkenness as an end in itself. The professional thief may come to steal gratuitously, without hope of any gain which he regards, simply because he takes a professional pride in his skill. A clever theft is to him a thing valuable for its own sake. The habitual breach of any law may ultimately produce a corresponding desire which must be, in every possible instance of its gratification, a source of pure evil. Thus lying, cruelty, social impurity, tend to fasten themselves permanently upon character by the formation of habits of choice, or vices, and ultimately to provide a permanent basis for themselves by the creation of special abnormal passions.

When vice enters thus deeply into character it becomes *baseness.* The idea of baseness is essentially that of degradation, the loss of a certain amount of the capacity for goodness, the acquisition of qualities positively evil. Baseness excites moral disapprobation in the most extreme form possible. The perversion of spiritual powers which are properly relative to the very highest of all possible ends, so that ends which are as evil as any ends can be become the good of the man, is the very extreme of badness.[1]

§ 6. Lawlessness.

Lawlessness, in general, is co-extensive with immorality. But the term lawlessness has a special signification. There is a disposition which is evil, not because it tends to the gratification of some particular desire to the disregard of the good, but because it rebels against moral restraint in

[1] The term *baseness* has a very wide range of application. It is used to express extreme moral degradation of every possible kind. Some faults are, in a special way, counted base—for example, treachery.

general. "Why should not man be free?" it cries—using the word freedom in an illusive sense—"Why should he be bound to prefer the so-called good to whatever desire may, at the moment, urge to the most attractive enjoyment?" The temptation is one which has peculiar power in youth, or with those who are of an enthusiastic or imaginative temper. It shows itself in a strong tendency to gratify the desires as they arise, in spite of the restrictions imposed by moral commands and social institutions. It embodies itself in habit, but it is the habit of what may be called ethical dissipation rather than special habits of committing certain offences. This is the character of the spendthrift, or the extravagant man, or the man who will not settle down into any definite position in the social system. There are, of course, those who do not for a long time settle down into any definite position in the social system, because they feel a call to higher things than the opportunities immediately present to them afford. Their character is altogether different from that of the Lawless man. He, if a man of ability, may, in proportion to his lawlessness, become a centre of social disturbance, or recklessly extravagant; or, if possessed of genius, may become one of those who do a little splendidly, much imperfectly, but bring "no fruit to perfection." Or the lawless man may gradually come to identify his defiance of the law with the commission of certain definite offences, and so drift into common vice.

A minor form of lawlessness is *frivolity*. This is the lawlessness of little minds. Great defiances of the laws or conventions of society are too terrifying for the small-minded. They gratify their desires as they arise, in defiance of duty, but only when the ends of the desires have but a slight social importance. The result is great moral in-

stability, and failure in all those obligations whose neglect does not entail any weighty social penalty. This is one of the commonest forms of badness. By the ease with which it escapes strong repròbation it scarcely seems to be badness. It is not surprising, then, that it should be almost as frequent among the old as among the young. When once it has taken a really strong hold upon character, there seems but slight hope of reformation.

§ 7. Selfishness.

The third leading division of badness is selfishness. In one way this division seems scarcely parallel to the other two, for all badness is selfish. It is a preference of a private gratification to the good which, as the good, is universal. But the selfish character is distinct from the vicious or lawless character. A man may be the victim of some evil habit, and yet when the claims of others are brought clearly before him he may even deny himself for the sake of their welfare. Some special vices, as for example avarice, seem to lead to selfishness, yet it not infrequently happens that a vicious or lawless man performs acts of the utmost kindness or charity. The selfish character is therefore a kind in itself.

Self-satisfaction is the form of every object willed; it is not, then, in pure self-regard that selfishness consists. All good is private good, but the good, or unselfish, man is he who identifies his private good with the good of others. The selfish man is, on the other hand, he who seeks a good for himself independently of the good of others.

Much of the good of life comes in the form of certain special well-recognised ends of human activity: such are money, the resources of comfort, and the particular objects of those desires which happen to be strong in the man. Each of these is sought as a good in its proper place. But,

when deciding upon a course of action, every man must look beyond the proximate end to some principle which will enable him to decide what is the good of the particular case. This dominating principle ought to be, as we saw, the identity of all personal goods, the fact that nothing can be the true good for one unless it is, at the same time, the true good for all. To be guided habitually by this principle, to have the habit of taking account of the welfare of others, is to be unselfish. Selfishness, on the other hand, means the adoption of some principle other than this, some principle which does not look beyond private good: some special ends which correspond to the man's prevailing desires are treated as though they provided a general principle for the guidance of the whole life. Selfishness may take the form of vice, as avarice. It may be regard for comfort, that is, for those goods which bring ease of body and mild sensational enjoyment. It may be the search for intense sensational enjoyment. But, whatever form it assumes, its essence is the habitual adoption of any principle other than the right one. The presence of this principle explains the degree of consistency which marks the life of the selfish man. The vicious man may become vicious because he has strong desires and does not control them, not because he adopts any vice as a rule of life. The lawless man may become lawless, not out of principle, but out of strong reaction against rules and conventions. But, for selfishness proper, there is necessary the adoption of a rule of life which, more or less consciously, shuts out the common good. No man is likely to adopt such a rule quite consistently. But, so far as any such principle prevails, the man is selfish. The common advice, "Take care of number one," though used ironically, is certainly

adopted, sometimes with full consciousness, by many who do not hesitate to confess to it. There are not a few, perhaps worse in profession than in practice, who openly assert that money-making, within the limits permitted by the law, is, and must be, the one supreme principle in all business transactions. Instance might be added to instance to show that selfish principles—principles, that is, which consciously exclude the common good—are frequent in everyday practice.

It is well to call attention to the fact that no man adopts any principle quite consistently. The unselfish man is he in whom the unselfish (or true) principle is called upon to give decision so frequently as to make him in the main unselfish. The selfish man is he in whom any principle, other than the true one, is adopted and allowed to prevail so frequently as to give a decided colour to the whole life. Further, it must be remembered that the application of the unselfish principle is, in most ordinary cases, made for the man through the institutions of society. He has but, in a faithful spirit, to do the duty that lies nearest him. Furthermore, in a very large class of cases, the principle is applied in the obeying of the command, or by cultivating the virtue, which obviously corresponds to the circumstances. Only in but few cases as compared with the whole of life, is it necessary to pause and make a careful estimate as to whether the contemplated act tends to the common good.

NOTE TO CHAPTER XI

THE SECONDARY SENSE OF FREEDOM

Freedom in its primary sense means self-determination. It is the characteristic of voluntary action as opposed to natural

action. But, when the moral life is regarded as a struggle, a new meaning of freedom rises into view. Through conflict, the man wins his freedom.

The opposition between the flesh and the spirit, between the desires as they arise (or as, owing to strength or sensational intensity, they urge to gratification) and regard for the good, is the central fact of the moral struggle. If the struggle ends in the defeat of the good, then some desire or set of desires becomes dominant, and the man may be said to be a slave. His growth becomes dwarfed or one-sided. The balance of his nature is disturbed. His self-evolution takes place along a line which does not truly realise his capabilities. There is loss of power and failure in satisfaction.

Freedom, then, in its secondary sense, consists in the full development of all a man's capabilities in their due degree, and is coincident with self-realisation. It is another way of expressing the moral end. The appropriateness of the term freedom seems to depend upon this, that the more fully the capabilities are realised, the greater is the range of the man's possibilities. Badness in every form involves the limitation of possibilities, the subordination of the desires and interests generally to some one desire, or group of desires, instead of to the good. When one desire becomes dominant it limits other desires, and frequently extinguishes some ; but when the good prevails, it gives to every desire its proper position and proportion in the economy of the man's nature, and so opens out to the full all his possibilities.

CHAPTER XII

MORAL INSTITUTIONS

§ 1. The Embodiment of the Idea in Institutions.

THE ethical principle embodies itself, as we saw, in laws, virtues, and institutions. All these are means by which the individual realises himself and, at the same time, subserves the realisation of others. Thus private and common good are identified. When a man determines to keep a moral law, or imitate a standard of virtue, he is, perhaps without fully understanding the nature of his action, identifying his good with a universal good. The presence of a common good is, however, much more obvious in the case of the social institution; for the very first principle involved in every social arrangement is *association*, or union with a view to some end conceived as common. How necessary is this conception of the end as common may be understood upon consideration that, even when men unite for the purpose of encouraging some form of mutual competition, they must do it on the supposition of some higher end which competition presupposes. If competition were the only end recognised, association would be impossible. And it is surely obvious that the very possibility of such institutions as the Family, Church, State, demand, to some degree at all events, the seeking by the individual of a common good.

The life of the individual is intimately bound up with the institutions of the society to which he belongs; so intimately, that for him most duties take their rise from the position which he occupies in the social system. As the child grows into consciousness he finds himself a member of the family, occupying a position which demands definite duties. For him the good takes the form of acts which require the suppression of many desires, which are demanded by the authority of parents and teachers, which respect the rights of the other members of the family, which are referred to rules and types of character that form the ideal recognised by the family. The family takes the child's moral life into its own life and prescribes his duties. On the side of the child, moralisation proceeds as he learns to identify his life with that of the family, adopting its ideals and doing the duties it demands. With years new relations are formed, and wider horizons become visible by means of larger institutions. The school, the university, the workshop, the office, the church, the state, prescribe new duties, give greater opportunities of individual development, make possible new ideals. By these means all ordinary duties are presented to the individual. He has not to live a life of perpetual hesitation asking, What ought I to do next? He has simply to do what lies to his hand waiting to be done. Yet, in doing all these duties in obedience to the demand of society, the man is no mere slave of convention. He is living the moral life of a freeman. If he perform his duties, as by a sort of compulsion, because he fears the penalty which follows disobedience, and not because he identifies himself with the social system, then indeed he is a slave. But the more he identifies private good with common good, the more, that is, he finds his

good in his share of the common social life, the more moral he is and the more freedom[1] does he possess. Only thus can self be realised and freedom attained.

§ 2. Social Value of Institutions.

A life can be morally full or great only through a wide social grasp. Cut a man off from participation in social institutions and he becomes morally stunted. Give to him a position in life in which he has a wide social influence, and enable him to act in that position in a spirit which consistently identifies his own good with the common good, and he will become morally great. Now such a position and such a life are possible only through the institutions of society.

It is not meant, of course, that all social institutions are perfect, or indeed good. But this much seems to be incontrovertible, that so far as any institution or society is coherent it is moral. Like Plato's pirates, the world holds together only in so far as it is just. Morality is the principle of cohesion in society and in every social institution. Pure individualism would mean social dissolution. Only in so far as man, transcending in practice the teaching of his reason, identifies self with others and seeks a common good can there be association. There is thus a correspondence between public socialisation and private moralisation; and it must be laid down as generally true that the man who, in the face of the complexity of circumstances, simply accepts the position given him by society, and does those things which society expects of him, is a moral man.

It must, of course, be remembered that society contains a vast number of institutions, all more or less imperfect, and comprises many separate groups of individuals recog-

[1] The term freedom is here used in its secondary sense. See note to chap. xi.

nising various standards of all degrees of relative perfection or imperfection. Even to those whose position in society is most limited there is open a wide range of selection. No man can surrender himself absolutely to any one social authority. Hence there is for every man a better and a worse, even though he be living the simple life of the plain man who does what is expected of him. The truth is, many different and often inconsistent things are expected of him, and the struggle of his life must very frequently take the form of a contest between desire to fulfil some expectations and regard for others which he recognises as better.

There must, as we have just seen, be a certain amount of good in all social institutions simply because they are social, because, that is, they involve the coherence of a group of individuals. A gang of thieves must contain men who are good according to a certain standard, or it could not be a gang. That a thief may possess goodness of a kind is evident from this that a thief who is treacherous to his associates is a worse man than one who is faithful.

But this inner morality which must exist in any association does not save such an institution as that just mentioned from being bad; it is bad, because in it association takes place for an anti-social purpose. Every such institution has in it the seeds of dissolution; since it is essentially contradictory to be good for the sake of being bad. But even such an association as this, while it lasts, gives opportunity for a certain amount of goodness. This extreme case shows how society may provide a field for the exercise of goodness, even though it contain many bad institutions. Thus there may be virtue of a very high order in societies in which such institutions as slavery and polygamy flourish. So also the ordinary man, whose penetration is not equal

to the great task of detecting the good or bad quality of the institutions to which he is accustomed, is able to live a truly moral life—or even a noble life—if he takes the world as he finds it, and performs his commonplace duties in a faithful spirit.

These considerations also make plain wherein essentially consists the goodness or badness of an institution. An institution is good in so far as it is social, in so far, that is, as it is a means of identifying private and common good. An institution is bad if, like piracy for instance, it is anti-social, if it is a means, that is, of putting the good of one group of individuals in direct antagonism[1] to the good of another group. An institution is relatively bad in so far as it tends to oppose the good of one to the good of another, or in so far as it fails to identify the good of one with the good of all.

§ 3. Specialisation of the Individual Function.

We have already dwelt upon the close relation which subsists between social institutions and the position and duties of the individual. It is important to notice how the function of the individual in the social system becomes more and more specialised as the organisation of society grows in complexity. There is perpetual movement in social arrangements; each great institution undergoes constant change, drops old branches, puts forth new ones. As the process goes on, the complexity becomes greater; and proportionately with the complexity of the whole the specialisation of the individual's function proceeds. Society becomes like a great factory in which each has his special share of the work, and though he may understand that

[1] Antagonism must be distinguished from competition. There can be no doubt that, within proper limits, competition possesses great social value. The question is, What are the proper limits?

share well, knows, as a rule, but little of the work of others.

It would be impossible to enter here into the details of social arrangement. The family, the workshop, the commune, the church, the state, with all the minor institutions which are attached to them; the connexion between the desires and interests of the individual and the social organisations in which he has a share; the correspondences which must exist between moral laws, virtues, and institutions; these and many other topics naturally invite attention here, but they could receive no adequate treatment within the limits to which this short treatise must be confined.

CHAPTER XIII

MORAL PROGRESS

§ 1. How far Moral Progress demands consideration.

SEVERAL interesting and important efforts have been made to apply to the process of moralisation those principles of explanation which get credit for such large results in the field of biology. Natural selection, through the struggle for existence, is supposed to enter into social progress, and to be the means of developing social types. The action and reaction of each society upon its social environment, and of environment upon society, is supposed to constitute a kind of competition by means of which weakly-organised communities disappear, and strongly-organised communities survive. The moral law becomes "A statement of the conditions, or of part of the conditions, essential to the vitality of the social tissue."[1] One able writer regards the struggle for existence as taking place among the various moral ideals recognised by different groups of men at the same time. "The growth of a new ideal is analogous to the growth of a new species in the organic world." "The good ideal has been created by a struggle of ideals in which it has predominated. Evil is simply that which has been rejected and defeated in the struggle with the good."[2]

[1] Leslie Stephen, *Science of Ethics*, p. 148.
[2] Alexander, *Moral Order and Progress*, pp. 306, 307.

Now there can be no doubt that the great struggle for existence which is so manifestly taking place all the world over must have some share in the process of social, and therefore of moral, progress. And it would be impossible to overrate the importance to science of every really careful attempt to give an account of that process, and to determine how far the principle of competition has entered into it. But we need not pause in our discussion in order to consider the value of the theories in question. The nature of morality remains unaltered, no matter what may be the details of the process by which men became aware of the moral law; for morality owes its existence, not to any process, but to the end to which man's whole being and all moral and social processes are relative. Ethics, as a science, deals, not with the discovery of causes, but with the discovery of ends.

There can be no question but that natural instincts and natural processes subserve moral progress, but it would be a great mistake if, in our brief examination, we were tempted to inquire into the precise functions and limits of such instincts and processes. The inquiry would be an endless one, and would, for our purpose, be quite beside the mark. For us, examination of moral progress is necessary only so far as will enable us so to classify the ends which have actually been aimed at in moral conduct as to judge of their possible interpretation by reference to the ultimate end. It must not be forgotten that action is moral only when it is due to motives or conceived ends. And the only moral progress we need consider is the advance which we are warranted by history in believing has been made in the way the ethical end has been conceived. We are concerned not with the scientific description of the process of social

evolution, but with the progress of ethical ideas so far as they actually entered into the minds of men and dominated their conduct. And even this can be touched upon, in the space at our disposal, only in a very brief and general manner.

§ 2. Progress of Society as a Whole.

Moral experience, whether of the individual or the race, cannot stand still, for the good consists in activity. The good is found in the concrete act, and the circumstances of every case are different from those of every other case. There is therefore constant movement. But there is progress as well as movement, for, as we have already concluded, the movement is dominated by an end. So far as activity is truly moral, the proximate end is a stage in the realisation of the ultimate end. Now, if this view is correct, the moral movement which is actually going on in the world should be seen to consist in the gradual coming into sight of a conception of the ethical end which approximates ever more nearly, though still perhaps very imperfectly, to the ideal End. We are not now concerned to inquire into the means by which this growing ethical vision may be imparted to mankind, whether it be due to human reason supervening upon natural instincts and upon the social situations brought about by natural processes, or to the teaching of philosophers who grow to understand by pure force of thought, or to the teaching of revelational religion. The question now is: Does the historical view of ethical movement show the gradual revelation of the Idea of the moral End, and correspondingly with this revelation of the Idea do we see growth in moralisation?

Now there can be scarcely a question that even the most slight historical review suffices to show precisely such a development.

"The idea of the good, it must be remembered, like all practical ideas, is primarily a demand. It is not derived from observation of what exists, but from an inward requirement that something should be; something that will yield self-satisfaction of the kind that is sought when we think of ourselves as surviving each particular desire and its gratification."[1] Now the question is: How has this demand been satisfied? What constituted the filling of this empty form? It is certainly the case that, however it came about, the true good, even in its simplest forms, has ever been found in ends which were sought as common. The moment man rises above the satisfaction of the passing desire, and does homage to a good conceived as other than that satisfaction, we find him identifying himself with others. As we have seen already, this is indeed essential to any community consisting of rational beings. A family of creatures acting upon instinct only might hold together through the presence of social instincts. But a family of creatures properly human, creatures possessed of rational wills, capable of self-presentation, cannot hold together unless the individual identifies his personal good with the good of the family. Apart from this identification, reason must prove itself a disintegrating force.

And so, among savage peoples, the good is conceived as a good for the tribe. The individual subordinates his desires to the welfare of the whole, otherwise there could be no community. But it is not his custom to regard the welfare of any one outside the tribe. He tolerates the existence of other tribes, only in so far as he and his fellow-tribesmen are unable to subdue them. Here is the idea of the good as common, but with a very limited range of community.

[1] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 246.

§ 3. The Widening of the Social Area.

Moral progress takes place by means of the widening of the social area. The tribe extends till it becomes the nation or state. To the Greek the State became the supreme object of moral regard, the sign which stood for the common good. The Greek who would use his slave as a chattel, or treat barbarians as unworthy of regard, would fight to the death for the commonwealth. Among the Jews we find an idea of the common good which, though as exclusive as the Greek idea, contained the germ of greater things. The common good of Jewish thought, on its social as distinguished from its religious side, was the good of the chosen people. With the glory of God corresponded the well-being of God's people. Both sides are equally present to the minds of the prophets, leaders, and teachers of Israel. The Jew who was true to the spirit of his nation, identified his personal good with the good of the chosen people, but never dreamt of identifying himself with Gentiles. Such a thought would have been to him sacrilege. In mediæval times, the church took the place of the chosen nation. This was a great extension of the area of the good. Wretched as was the condition of the serf, he was still, in theory at all events, if a baptized Christian, equally with his lord, a child of God and an heir of heaven. He had claims to consideration and regard as a man and a brother, for his soul's sake, even though his claims were not always admitted in practice.

Only in the modern world[1] has the teaching of the

[1] Even in very modern times and among highly civilised peoples cases occur in which racial differences are permitted to, practically, limit the area of the common good. For a large part of this century in the southern states of America negroes were not regarded as persons, but as things, not as ends in themselves, but as means to be used for the good

parable of the good Samaritan come to be fully understood.[1] Now it seems a mere commonplace to talk of the human family, or the brotherhood of mankind, or the universal Fatherhood of God, or to speak of heathen or savage peoples or unbelievers as of persons possessed of rights equally well founded with our own. Yet these commonplaces are a mark of ethical advance more striking, more convincing, than perhaps any others which exist.

§ 4. Growth in Social Complexity.

The idea of the true good, then, beginning as "a demand unconscious of the full nature of its object," finds its first content as the idea of a good common to self and some others, and then gradually extends its range until it becomes the idea of a good common to self and all others. But this widening of the range of the common good involves, at the same time, an ever-increasing complexity of social arrangement. The simplicity of the tribe, where the chief and the medicine-man share authority, gives place to the organised State. The organised State gave place to a far more grandly conceived social universe, the Catholic Church, which passed the bounds set by kingdoms and

of others. Slavery, however kindliness may qualify its nature in particular instances, is essentially the denial of the self-hood of the person who is subject to it.

[1] It may perhaps be thought that the great missionary zeal of the apostolic and sub-apostolic ages involved a recognition of the brotherhood of mankind; and there can be no doubt that it did. But we are here considering, not epochs of great ethical enlightenment, but the settled characteristics of long periods. The ethical teaching of the Founder of Christianity presents an ideal which is not only in advance of anything recognised in mediæval times, but is ahead of anything attained by the most ethically advanced section of the modern world. His teaching, indeed, presents the absolute ideal in a manner which is quite unique in its applicability to the ordinary life of men. No wonder if His immediate disciples caught something of His spirit.

languages, and broke through old antagonisms by introducing a higher bond of union than any which kinship or language could provide. Lastly, the economic unity of the modern world has given a practical possibility to the conception of a universal brotherhood which could never have existed in any former age.

Thus the complexity of social life increased *pari passu* with the extension of the range of the common good. Now, as the complexity of social life increases, the desires and interests of men must increase in number and in variety. Hence new laws must rise into the moral consciousness, new virtues must be recognised, above all new institutions must be formed. And all these processes can be traced quite easily, even in the most rapid survey of ethical history. The Ten Commandments still stand as the core of the moral law; but, when we apply them under modern conditions, we usually make each commandment into a sort of category under which is grouped a great number of more modernly-conceived rules.[1] The Platonic list of virtues may still serve as, in the main, the best general classification, but only because we give to each virtue a vast range of application which would

[1] A very clear and remarkable instance of a new moral law is "Thou shalt not be dirty," with its corresponding virtue, cleanliness. It is quite modern. Moreover, its moral character is fast becoming recognised. The proved close connexion between dirt and disease is hastening this recognition. To call such a rule moral will seem to many almost impious, for it will seem to be a placing of it on a level with such a command as "Thou shalt not steal." But this is a mistake. Though it is distinctly moral, it is not on a level with the old command, for the old command, just because it is old, deals with something which lies at the very root of social well-being, and its breach is, consequently, an indication of a much deeper defect in character than the breach of a new command.

have no meaning for a Greek of the classic age. And as regards social institutions, we have still the family, the workshop, the church, the state, as men had any time within the last thirty centuries, but how changed. The family, it is true, preserves its primitive simplicity—a simplicity greater perhaps than it possessed among some less civilised peoples—being founded on a relation which must remain constant. But, even in the family, co-ordination has taken the place of subordination as the appropriate description of the relation of wife to husband, and affectionate regard has to a great extent supplanted the rigour of ancient paternal rule. The workshop has become the factory in all its thousand forms, while the vast industrial, commercial, and financial systems of the modern world have been superadded. The Church and the State protect beneath their shadow a multitude of institutions, industrial, benevolent, educational, whose number and variety seem destined to increase indefinitely.

§ 5. The Social Reformer.

The growing-point of moral progress is to be found in the work of the social reformer. He is sometimes merely the man who, to meet some need which presses greatly upon him in his own peculiar work, devises some new form of social arrangement. At other times, he is the man whose keen vision detects, even through the mist of custom, an imperfection in some institution, and who labours to discover a remedy. Or, again, he is the man who with almost prophetic insight lays his finger upon some widespread imperfection, some large class of cases in which the ideal is not as nearly reached as it should be. This is the man to whom the ideal is a clearer, brighter reality than it is to his fellow-men, and who therefore realises, as they do not, the failure to attain it.

The moral reformer is at his best when he comes at a great epoch, at a time, that is, when old institutions have become rotten, and when their rottenness has caused a deep dissatisfaction in the minds of men. Every such epoch is sure to call forth some man fitted to play the part of a reformer; and, if the epoch is happy in its reformer, it becomes all the greater thereby. Thus the greatness of the epoch depends partly on the greatness of the changes which have to be made, and partly on the greatness of the men who arise to make them.

§ 6. Realisation of the Ideal.

This brief survey of the nature of the changes which constitute moral progress as it actually takes place is altogether in harmony with the view which has been adopted all along of the nature of the Ethical End. If the principles of our investigation are sound, then moral progress must be dominated throughout by the Idea of the Ultimate End. But this idea is, as we saw, the conception of self-realisation in activity taking place through correspondence between each person and a moral universe in correspondence with which every person finds his realisation. Now, both in extension and intension, moral progress is tending to this ideal. In extension, by the gradual inclusion of all persons on terms which approximate ever more nearly to equality of ethical regard. In intension, by the growth in complexity of the whole social system carrying with it the specialisation of the function of each individual; so that the individual comes, more and more, to form a necessary part of the whole, and so to contribute to the realisation of all while working out his own realisation.

How far such an ideal could ever realise itself under mundane conditions, it is impossible to say. The point

of importance is, that, even under mundane conditions, it is the dominating principle of moralisation.

§ 7. Individual Progress.

Only thus briefly have we been able to touch upon the great question of the ethical progress of society at large. We have now to turn our attention for a short space to another side of moral progress, and consider the moral life of the individual.

Movement in the life of the individual consists in the reaction of the Will upon the special circumstances of every case as it arises. To every exercise of this power corresponds, as already shown, a new adjustment of the character. The activity, in fact, has two sides, an outer side of conduct, an inner side of character. When thinking of progress it is necessary to direct attention chiefly to the latter, for here activity is cumulative, or, in other words, leads to the formation of habits.

It is worthy of note that this movement is not merely the formation of habits of choice, virtues and vices, it is also the formation of desires and interests, and, to some extent, even of feelings. That this is so is evident in general; but it may be seen more particularly by taking the case of education. If a man set himself to learn a language, for instance, he cultivates not merely one new interest, but a whole set of new interests. He finds himself interested in the literature, the history, the art of the people to whom the language belongs in a way in which he never was before. He may even find in himself ultimately a strong desire to visit the country to which all these interests attach, and so have actually created a new desire.[1]

[1] These considerations show that we are, to a great extent, responsible for our desires and the temptations to which they lead. A man, for instance, who has cultivated the art of cynical speech is responsible

Thus, as the movement of the individual life proceeds, new possibilities, as well as new activities of character and conduct, spring into being.

Now it is plain from all that we have come to understand concerning the nature of morality, that the moral progress of the individual can be nothing else than the continuous identification of self with the moral end in each case. Thus self-realisation is attained. The general description of individual progress has therefore been given already so far as it can be given in this short outline. It remains merely to show, in a plain and very brief manner, how this process takes its place in the general progress of society.

§ 8. Raising the Individual Standard.

In the first instance, progress means, for the individual, the raising of his habitual conduct to the standard recognised by the society to which he belongs. This is no small task, for it involves both the intelligent apprehension of the standard, and the will to act in accordance with the standard when once it has been intelligently apprehended. The first is the moral use of the intelligence, the second is the moral exercise of the will. The one is the will to know the good, the other the will to do it. Both processes demand the control of desire, the resisting of temptation. The force of temptation depends, partly on the strength of the desire to which it appeals, and partly on the weakness of the will; while the weakness of the will consists in the presence of vices or the absence of virtues, that is, in the habits of choice which characterise the man. If there are, as there surely will be to some extent, habits of evil choice, then the difficulties in the way of either knowing the

for the desire to practise it when acquired, and for the temptations to which his artificial aptitude lays him open.

standard, or acting up to it when it is known, may be very great. As a matter of fact, the difficulties are so great that if any one finds himself harbouring the belief that he has consistently done right according to his light during any considerable course of conduct, he may be sure, on reflection, that either his light has been very dim (much dimmer than it should have been), or he is the victim of self-deception.

But the standard recognised by society has many degrees of relative perfection and imperfection. There are societies within society according to the degree of perfection with which the standard is habitually conceived by different groups of persons. Progress is therefore possible through the gradual raising of the individual standard up to the level of that recognised by the most ethically advanced section of the society to which the man belongs. Thus a man may receive in early life a very defective ethical education, his lot may be cast among those whose habitual standard is low. He may, however, rise out of this condition, improve socially and morally, and gradually ascend from standard to standard till he is able to take his place among the foremost of his generation.

It is well to note that the standard which is here spoken of is not the absolute standard or ethical principle, the idea of the ultimate end, but the standard which is relative to the condition of society as it is at the time, the ethical idea so far as it has received a definite content. This relative standard is to be found, of course, in the laws, virtues, and institutions which are recognised by society.

§ 9. The Conditions of Progress.

What, it may be asked, are the conditions of progress in the individual? The first condition of progress seems to be the recognition of the greatness of the ideal. On

the subjective side this recognition yields the sense of immeasurable loss as essential to wrong-doing. Nor is this sense of loss identical with the regret or vexation which follows the loss of a mere possession, as pleasure or money. The loss which is realised is not loss of any thing or of the gratification of any desire. It is self-loss.[1] On the objective side this recognition gains a peculiar meaning and value when the ideal is viewed as character. The ideal, then, takes the form of a perfectly holy person. When, further, this ideal is believed to be fully realised even now in God, the negative and the positive unite to produce that moral situation which has been described as "self-abasement in the presence of an Ideal of Personal Holiness." This is the humiliation which leads to exaltation.

The second condition of progress in the individual is a self-sacrificing will; that is, the will to sacrifice the desire of the moment for the sake of the good. We saw that self-denial forms a very important factor in goodness of character. Though not itself virtue, it is virtue in the making. This is a condition which is essential to progress, which enters as a necessary element into the struggle of life by which progress is attained. Thus is the flesh subdued to the spirit. Thus does the man lose his life that he may gain it.

[1] Compare D. G. Rossetti, *House of Life*, Sonnet lxxxvi.—

> The lost days of my life until to-day
> What were they, could I see them on the street
> Lie as they fell? . . .
> I do not see them here; but after death,
> God knows, I know the faces I shall see.
> Each one a murdered self, with low, last breath:
> "I am thyself—what hast thou done to me?
> And I—and I—thyself (lo! each one saith),
> And thou thyself to all eternity."

A third condition is the presence of those emotional springs of action which have a distinctly moral value, because they correspond to very large classes of right conduct. Such are pity, admiration, reverence. Two are especially valuable as aids to progress—benevolence,[1] or the love of the neighbour, and reverence for the good as such, or, when regarded from the highest point of view, the love[1] of God. The last named principle coincides with the whole of virtue and good conduct. It is never out of place. It can prompt and beautify the smallest acts, so far as they become objects of moral reflection, as well as the greatest. In little things, it is the mind of him[2] who can pray for eagerness to labour and be happy; in great things, it is that devotion to the good which marks the moral hero and martyr.

Lastly, among the principal conditions of individual progress, must be mentioned conscientiousness, or the moral use of the understanding in determining what is the good of the particular case. Self-sacrificing devotion to the good may become the fanatical enthusiasm of the zealot, if it is not accompanied by the moderating influence of intelligence. There is a point of view from which all virtue appears as wisdom; even so, there must be an all-pervading element of morally-applied intelligence in the struggle of the individual life, if that struggle is to be described as progress.

§ 10. Reformation.

It might seem almost necessary to touch here on moral degradation, the opposite of moral progress. But that side

[1] It must be remembered that these terms, as commonly used, group together the emotional spring and the virtue which corresponds to it. We have found it necessary to distinguish them. See chap. ix.

[2] R. L. Stevenson's prayer. See *Spectator*, 23rd March 1895.

of the struggle of life has been sufficiently dealt with under the head of badness. The thought of the contrast between progress and degradation suggests, however, the consideration of the possibility and nature of reformation. This is a great subject, and one which can receive but very inadequate discussion here.

When a human soul wakens to the consciousness of the greatness of the moral ideal as contrasted with his own littleness, when he realises the enormous distance which separates the "is" of his life from the "ought to be," there supervenes what may perhaps most properly be called *Remorse.*[1] Remorse is, however, far more intense when it takes its rise, not merely from the recognition of imperfection, but from the clear consciousness of continued moral descent. Then it is that remorse becomes a deep dissatisfaction with self, a self-loathing[2] arising out of the thought of wilful self-degradation.

Remorse should lead to reformation. But it does not always do so; for it is hard to preserve that clearness of spiritual vision which is gained in moments of insight. When the moment of insight is past the old habits reassert themselves, old social influences regain their power, even the old spiritual blindness returns. Of the well-braced character it may be true that—

> . . . tasks in hours of insight will'd,
> Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd;

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[1] Remorse is sometimes supposed to imply despair. This seems an inconvenient limitation of meaning. See Mackenzie, *op. cit.* p. 259. See also chap. vii. § 8.

[2] "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 5, 6). Here self-loathing is referred mainly to the comparison of self with the infinite perfection of the Ideal.

but it is not true of poor souls who have sunk down through untold degrees of delinquency from whatever height of innocence or moral attainment they formerly occupied. It has, therefore, been at all times a cause of complaint against moral teachers that, though very ready to tell men what to do, they have always failed to say how to do it. The struggle of life demands, as well as moral teaching, a moral force capable of raising the fallen. And this is a demand which ethical science cannot supply. Power for a new life, moral dynamic, comes to man, not through science of any sort, but through religion.

CHAPTER XIV

PERPLEXITY OF CONSCIENCE

§ 1. How far a Moral Theory can be expected to solve Particular Difficulties.

THE average man is probably inclined to test the value of any theory of ethics which may be presented to him by the readiness with which it lends itself to the solution of those practical difficulties which may be conveniently grouped together under the head of perplexity of conscience. But the truth is, that no moral theory can be expected to do much in the way of dissolving doubts of this sort, because duty is found in the particular, and is, in every instance, relative to the peculiar circumstances of the case, and no theory or set of rules which could possibly be framed could provide a measure for the infinite variety of the concrete.

The principal use of a moral theory is not to be sought in any such immediate application to particular difficulties, but in its justification of the moral experience of mankind, and in its consequent safeguarding from scepticism as to the reality of the good.

Perplexity of conscience demands, however, a certain amount of consideration. Though ethical theory cannot be expected to clear up all practical difficulties, it is not so powerless as to be unable to set the inquirer on a path which will lead him to a position in which he will be better able to solve his problems for himself.

§ 2. The Causes of Perplexity.

(1) Perplexity may arise from conflict between moral standards. Laws conflict with laws, or with virtues or institutions; or different virtues or institutions seem, in particular instances, inconsistent with one another. It is wrong to lie, but it is possible to imagine cases in which to tell the truth may seem to amount to treachery, almost to murder. It is right to be benevolent, but there are times when what seems the plain guidance of benevolence would lead to injustice. It is right to obey parents, to submit to the law of the land, to be courteous; but there are times when parents must be disobeyed, the law defied, politeness nothing accounted of. Moral heroes have done all these things, and in doing them acquired undying fame. Duty to the family conflicts with duty to the State, or duty to the Church, or duty to God. Which duty is to be done?

Secondly, (2) perplexity may arise from the difficulty of referring the particular case to any rule. No law seems to cover it. No institution or virtue seems to own it. Yet the case is clearly not trivial, to be settled by the fancy of the moment, as it is obviously right that many trivial cases should be settled.[1]

Thirdly, (3) there are cases in which circumstances are so exceedingly complex that it is almost impossible to apply any rule. The difficulty resides, not in the application of some recognised principle, but in the finding out what exactly the case itself is.

Lastly, (4) there is what Bishop Butler called self-deceit, what Professor Green called self-sophistication, mystification

[1] It is not to be forgotten that there are many cases in which the good consists in giving free play to the fancy of the moment. Ordinary conversation is a perpetual illustration of this. It is well to remember, however, that it is very easy to pass the limits within which this free play of fancy is permissible.

practised by self upon self. In some extreme cases there is no appearance of perplexity, because the deception is complete. This is, in general, the class of cases contemplated by Bishop Butler. In other cases there is what seems to be perplexity of conscience: the man debates with himself the question what he ought to do. But the debate is really the effort to find an excuse for doing something which a truly conscientious examination would show to be wrong. Self-sophistication is, in fact, the opposite of conscientiousness. The latter is the moral use of the understanding in the determination of the particulars of the case, the former is the corresponding immoral use of the understanding. The one is the unbiassed effort to know the circumstances exactly as they are, the other is the effort to make the circumstances appear as they are not.

The third and fourth kinds of perplexity are not really cases of conscience. The third is an intellectual difficulty. The fourth is, as we have seen, a grave moral delinquency. Our examination is therefore confined to the first two classes—cases in which rules conflict, and cases to which no rule seems to apply.

§ 3. Conflict of Rules.

There is no such thing, it must be remembered, as a real conflict of duties. The right of every case is one. Under every group of circumstances which forms a field of action there is but one act which is the good of the case. Conflict is impossible. Conflict is between rules, not duties; and arises, as already pointed out more than once, because abstract rules cannot fully cover the infinite variety of the concrete. There is consolation in this reflection, for it proves that the imperfection is not in the good, but in our imperfect mode of expressing it. The good, then, is to be found in the case itself, and the first

business of the perplexed mind is to know as simply as possible what the case is. The mere effort to determine this, as simply and in as conscientious a manner as possible, is of itself often sufficient to solve the problem. But if, when the case has been determined as well as the mind can do it, the difficulty still remains, what is to be done? Is help to be sought in casuistry? The answer must be a decided negative. Rules of casuistry are dangerous in two ways. First, the very fact that they take the form of rules for the breaking of rules makes them liable to become a means of self-deception. They tend to habituate the mind to the violation of the law. They set ingenious intellects to work devising possible instances in which it may be lawful to break the law. They turn thought in an immoral direction. Secondly, rules of casuistry are much more likely to lead to error, if applied generally, than any set of moral laws could be. And the reason is obvious. They are further from the concrete. They are universals which group, not acts, but rules. They are abstracts of abstracts. The consequence is that, by applying them to the concrete, the chance of error is multiplied. There is, then, no help to be had in systematic casuistry. There is, however, a rule which, though it is as general as any practical rule can be, has its application to every case, no matter how complicated. And that rule is the ethical principle itself. Let it be kept well in view, and it will give more help than any other. Whether as the golden rule of Christianity, or as that love which sums up all commandments, or as the Kantian rule to treat humanity always in every person as an end withal, and never as a means only, the ethical principle is itself the most potent solvent of doubt.

But it is not to be imagined that by means of this or any other formula there is hope of settling all cases of perplexity. Honest dealing with self and a "single eye" to the true good are the best means of solving difficulties. But they are the best, not because they provide an infallibly accurate formula, but because they are the means by which will be formed that temper of mind and that ethical tact which are better than any formula.

§ 4. Cases not covered by any Rule.

There is, however, one rule which applies to the second kind of perplexity, and which may be mentioned here with advantage. In cases where there is on one side a private interest or desire and on the other a possibility (not a certainty) of obligation, it may be right to decide against the private interest, because self-denial for duty's sake trains the character to virtue. It is scarcely permissible to express this rule in any more definite manner. There is danger lest the morbidly sensitive mind should detect possibilities of obligation everywhere, and cultivate self-torture. Here, again, the burden of decision rests upon the individual. No rule or external authority can solve his perplexities for him.

§ 5. General Considerations.

It is noteworthy how large is the personal factor in every case of perplexity. Where no clear rule applies, it is almost impossible for another to judge correctly concerning the morality of the decision which the perplexed person may make; for its morality depends on the actual amount of his knowledge, the clearness of his natural powers of insight, the amount of knowledge which he ought to possess, and the relations which the circumstances bear to the rest of his life. And who could penetrate these recesses?

In every instance past life and present conduct are

inseparable. No matter whether the decision of any particular case be right or wrong, the particular case itself derives its character to a great extent from past decisions. Hence the general conclusion must be that the ability to solve difficulties aright depends, for the most part, not on natural ability or even the conscientiousness of the moment, but on the general tenor of the whole life. Life is an art, and he who desires to excel must learn his skill by practice. The quickness of eye which takes in a new situation in a moment, the tact which instantly suits action to need, the trained intelligence which, in the painful examination of some puzzling complication, selects the main factors and neglects the unimportant, all this is the result of long attention and patient application. The way to solve the moral perplexities of great occasions is to practise morality every day. The way to be good in great things is to be good in little things. The way to know the good when knowledge is hard is to do the good when knowledge is easy.

APPENDICES TO PART II

I

THE CIRCLE IN THE ETHICAL ARGUMENT

§ 1. The Circle.

THE answers which have been given to the leading questions of ethical inquiry seem open to an objection which may appear very grave unless its nature is properly understood.

When it is asked, What is the essential nature of moral goodness? the answer which we have seen reason to regard as satisfactory is: goodness consists in self-realisation. But when the further question is asked, How is self-realisation to be attained? the only answer we are able to give is: Through good conduct as ordinarily conceived, through obedience, that is, to the rules which are to be found in the laws, virtues, and institutions actually recognised by society. The argument moves from the good, as that which satisfies or realises self, to self-realisation as found in the good. It seems a mere logical see-saw or circle.

Again, to the question, Why are men bound to do good? we have been able only to answer: Because by so doing they realise self. This we saw to be the meaning of autonomy. But, let it be asked, Why should man realise self? why should man pursue self as an end? the only possible answer is to be found in words which, in one way or another, simply declare: This is the good of man.

§ 2. Explanation of the Difficulty.

To regard, however, this logical see-saw as an objection to the ethical doctrine adopted above is to misapprehend the whole nature of the inquiry, and to fail to grasp the possibilities

of ethical science. The truth is, there must be a circle in any true ethical theory, for man is, by his very nature, an end in and to himself. It is impossible to escape the circle of the self. It is this very fact which gives rise to the judgment that something is absolutely desirable for its own sake. There is a good for man, just because he has a self-objectifying consciousness. Apart from this consciousness, there could be no good for man and no ethical theory for philosophy.

II

FUTURE LIFE

THE question as to a life after death is most appropriately considered here, because the discussion of it is, to a large extent, ethical as well as philosophical.

§ 1. Kant's View.

Kant assumed three postulates—suppositions practically necessary, because without them the moral law would be unmeaning. These postulates are: *immortality*, *freedom*, and *the existence of God*. The second and third of these need not detain us. Freedom and the existence of God have engaged our attention sufficiently for our purpose already; and we have seen reason to hold that belief in them is not dependent upon practical considerations merely. But the first, though not perhaps so dependent as Kant believed upon practical necessity, seems best regarded from the practical standpoint. Kant's view is most important. "The realisation of the *summum bonum* in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. But in this will the *perfect accordance* of the mind with the moral law is the supreme condition of the *summum bonum*. . . . Now the perfect accordance of the will with the moral law is *holiness*, a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence. Since, nevertheless, it is required as practically necessary, it can only be found in a *progress in infinitum* towards that perfect accordance. . . .

Now this endless progress[1] is only possible on the supposition of an *endless* duration of the *existence* and personality of the same rational being (which is called the immortality of the soul)."[2] The postulate of immortality, then, "results from the practically necessary condition of a duration adequate to the complete fulfilment of the moral law."[3]

In spite of the fact that we have not been able to adopt Kant's ethical theory as a whole, we can have no hesitation in recognising the importance of this view. We cannot but regard the *summum bonum* as an indefinitely distant ideal. The whole moral life of men and nations consists, not in the attainment of the ultimate end, but in the constant attainment of the proximate end as a stage in the realisation of the ultimate end. Moral progress is a *progress towards completeness.* Further, we saw that the ultimate end is such that it implies the realisation of all persons. It is such, that the realisation of each contributes to the realisation of all, and the

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[1] The phrase "endless progress" lays Kant open to the Hegelian criticism that he finds the essence of immortality in the false, or negative, infinity; and so dooms the human spirit to everlasting incompleteness, perpetual contradiction. We cannot enter here into an examination of this criticism. It is sufficient for our purpose to point out that the phrase "endless progress" is one which, on our principles, cannot be admitted. For us, moral progress is not endless, but *to an end.* See Hegel, *op. cit.* pp. 175, 176, and Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, pp. 211, 212.

[2] Kant's *Theory of Ethics* (Dr. Abbott's translation), p. 218, 3rd ed.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 230. It is a curious and interesting fact (pointed out by Professor Bernard) that Kant's proof of immortality was anticipated by Addison. In the *Spectator* (No. cxi.) he writes: "Among these and other excellent arguments for the immortality of the soul, there is one drawn from the perpetual progress of the soul to its perfection, without a possibility of ever arriving at it; which is a hint that I do not remember to have seen opened and improved by others who have written on this subject, though it seems to me to carry a great weight with it. How can it enter into the thoughts of man, that the soul, which is capable of such immense perfections, and of receiving new improvements to all eternity, shall fall away into nothing almost as soon as it is created?"

realisation of all involves the realisation of each. It is therefore an ideal for the individual, as well as for the race. Now such an ideal cannot be realised in the individual under mundane conditions.

But, for us, the belief in a future life does not rest upon practical considerations only. The principles to which we were led provide a speculative justification also.

§ 2. The Spiritual Nature of Man.

And first, let it be noted, how much is gained by a clear apprehension of man's spiritual nature. Materialism, though some have held it to be consistent with a belief in a future life, is, in conjunction with modern biological doctrines, the main source of disbelief in immortality. But materialism is an impossible theory for any one who has grasped the fundamental thought of chapter i. of Part I. Materialism is but one of the many futile efforts to explain the concrete in terms of the abstract. The easiest way to see this is to consider that materialism must assume space, time, and succession of events in time, and that space, time, and series demand the Self as the condition of their possibility.[1] Once this is understood, belief in man's spiritual nature becomes established.

Again, man as spirit is not in time. Time exists for spirit, not spirit for time. This consideration cannot be said to prove immortality. Its true value is to be found in the clear strong line which it draws between spirit and any of those things which exist in time as elements in experience, and which are therefore essentially perishing, mere stages in a process. Any one who has grasped the essential difference between spirit and the mere thing will find it hard to believe that spirit perishes as the thing perishes.

§ 3. Theism the Final Justification.

Theism is, however, the final justification of the belief in future life. We have seen that God must be regarded as personal, and, at the same time, more than personal. As personal, His being involves an absolute end. As more than personal, He is the ultimate unit which unifies the multitude of personal beings, and so identifies all good. What is good for God is good for all. Or, in other words, the full realisation of persons is at least one aspect of the end which is

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[1] See Maguire's *Lectures*, Lecture iii.

relative to God. Now since this full realisation cannot be attained under mundane conditions, it follows that the end which God sets before Him implies a future life for men.

This is no new doctrine. It is the doctrine contained in the saying, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." If God identifies Himself with men He will not leave them incomplete. No spiritual being can find his complete realisation in that cosmos of experience which he calls his life in this world. His complete realisation demands another life, and since, in God, all must form a perfect system, that other life will be granted.

§ 4. Proof from the Incompleteness of Life.

The argument most commonly relied on to prove a future life is that which dwells upon the incompleteness of this life. The argument is a good one. But its value depends upon the answer given to the question, Why should we expect life to be complete? To this there can be no answer but Theism. He who believes that God is, must also believe that God will finish the work which He has begun. God's work cannot be incomplete. The argument is especially forcible, because the incompleteness is moral, not physical. Physical incompleteness might be a mere appearance, not a reality, any apparent imperfection being a point of correspondence with some other physical arrangement not within our ken. But moral completeness, if it is to exist at all, must take place within the compass of each individual self, and therefore demands other experience than can ever be had here on earth.

But why is it necessary to suppose that God must finish the work which He has begun? Why is it that God's work cannot be incomplete? The argument seems to assume not merely that God is, but that He is Almighty and All-good. The simplest answer to this difficulty is the most philosophical. To say that God is Almighty and All-good is, since God is the ultimate concrete unit as well as personal, merely another way of saying that the universe forms a perfect system. And this is the fundamental presupposition of all thought, all science, all philosophy.

PART III

CRITICISM

CHAPTER I

INTUITIONALISM

§ 1. Limits of the Discussion.

CRITICAL examination of rival ethical theories has been avoided as much as possible hitherto. But it cannot be omitted altogether; for dissent from the doctrine set forth above will arise principally from the fact that the minds of very many are pre-occupied by other views. Our examination must, however, be very brief. It must deal only with the main points of each theory, and it must cut short many interesting discussions and explanations.

It is well to note that though the various ethical theories may be described as rivals, the opposition is not so great as it appears. Each theory has contributed some valuable element to the whole of ethical thought.[1] While, then, we are at present especially concerned with what seem to be the principal errors which have been made by ethical thinkers, it must not be forgotten that much is due even to those from whom we are compelled to differ the most. We cannot now pause to discuss the various elements which different ethical systems have contributed. To do so fully would be to write a history of Ethics. We have,

[1] Mr. Muirhead in his *Elements of Ethics* has given much attention to this. The reader is referred to that work for a clear and brief exposition of the contributions of the various theories.

unfortunately, to confine our attention for the most part to the points of disagreement. We can but hope that, in spite of this inevitable feature of the discussion, the acknowledged value of other theories may to some degree become evident.

§ 2. Intuitionalism, a Special Theory of Conscience.

Intuitionalism stands first in the list of rival theories. This theory claims conscience as a special faculty, whose office it is to give judgment upon conduct. Conscience, it is said, is ultimate. It is intuitive in its judgments. It is an essential part of human nature. It is therefore supreme. There is no appeal to any higher court. It is not asserted, however, that the consciences of all men would give the same judgments under the same circumstances, that the faculty is equally developed in all. This unequal development, it is contended, is a disadvantage which attends the exercise of all faculties. All are more perfectly developed in some men than in others.

We saw above[1] that the faculty which yields the judgment, "This ought to be," is not a special faculty at all. We also saw wherein the special character of the moral "ought" consists. But the intuitionalist theory demands some further consideration.

§ 3. Difficulties in the Theory.

Conscience includes, as already shown, a judicial element as well as an element of feeling. This leads at once to difficulty, for these two elements do not always agree. Every person's experience would supply instances in which calm dispassionate judgment pointed clearly to a course of action against which feeling rebelled so strongly and persistently that the performing of duty felt almost criminal. It is of no avail to say in opposition that this feeling was not the moral sentiment, because feeling apart

[1] See part ii. chap. vii. § 5.

from judgment can provide no index to the quality of the action with which it is connected. To suppose it can is the mistake of those who imagine that conscience is mere feeling. If moral sense is "sense," and nothing else, it is absolutely worthless for purposes of moral valuation.

As already stated, the enlightened Intuitionalist does not hold that the consciences of all men are equally developed. He holds that, as it is with reason, so it is with conscience; both lead to higher, truer, and better results when employed by the civilised or educated man than when employed by the uncivilised or uneducated.

But this argument does not account for the enormous divergence in the consciences of men of different times and places. The sharpening and polishing of the faculties by civilisation does not provide a cure for the undeveloped conscience as it does for the undeveloped intellect. A demonstration in Euclid was as convincing two thousand years ago as it is to-day, yet practices were permitted in the Athens of Plato which would be regarded with horror now. Instance might be added to instance. In the words of Locke, "He that will carefully peruse the history of mankind, and look abroad into the several tribes of men, and with indifferency survey their actions, will be able to satisfy himself that there is scarce that principle of morality to be named, or rule of virtue to be thought on (those only excepted that are absolutely necessary to hold society together, which commonly, too, are neglected betwixt distinct societies), which is not, somewhere or other, slighted and condemned by the general fashion of whole societies of men governed by practical opinions and rules of living quite opposite to others."[1]

[1] Locke, *Essay*, i. 3, § 10.

§ 4. The Last Resource of the Intuitionalist.

The usual resource of the Intuitionalist, when pressed hard by this contention, is to fall back upon the position that the Intuitive element in Conscience is the belief that there is a real distinction between right and wrong, good and bad. And here he is on safe ground; for this belief is but another aspect of man's self-objectifying consciousness. Man is an end to himself. He must seek the good and, in seeking it, assume that it is.

But this last resource of Intuitionalism amounts to an abandonment of the whole theory, for Conscience as an intuitive faculty of moral judgment has disappeared. It is not a special faculty any longer; and, in so far as it is capable of moral judgment, it is not intuitive. The belief that the good is, does not of itself supply any standard by which to determine what is good.

§ 5. The Form of the Dicta of Conscience.

One other consideration demands attention. If Conscience, as a faculty of moral judgment, is a primitive fact in human nature, it is worth while inquiring into the form of its *dicta*. Conscience does not make a separate and independent decision for every case as it arises. It legislates for classes of action. It condemns this particular act, not because this act is intuitively discerned to be wrong, but because this act, when intelligently examined, can be referred to some such class as dishonest or untruthful or impure. That is, Conscience is the source of certain laws which cover large classes of acts. This is the more evident from the fact that perplexity of conscience is concerned, as a rule, with individual cases and not with wide classes of acts. There is no doubt, for instance, whether lying in general is wrong; but there may be grave questioning as to whether some particular falsehood is wrong?

Now, if conscience must be regarded as a faculty which

decides by laying down certain laws, it cannot be regarded as ultimate; for laws, as appeared above, do not express the ultimate truth of morality. Laws conflict only too frequently. Conscience may then be at war with itself, not only through opposition between the moral judgment and the moral sentiment, but also on account of opposition between two judgments which are equally authoritative.[1]

[1] Much of the above is to be found in Mr. Muirhead's *Elements of Ethics*, bk. ii. ch. ii. § 33.

CHAPTER II

HEDONISM

§ 1. Ancient Hedonism.

HEDONISM is one of the oldest of Ethical theories. It appears first in the history of Philosophy as the doctrine of Aristippus of Cyrene, the founder of the Cyrenaic School. After the death of Socrates, Aristippus, who till then had passed for a Socratic, laid hold upon one element in the somewhat amorphous teaching of his master—the element of pleasure—and made it the basis of a simple but systematic theory of life. Pleasure, with Aristippus, means, not happiness in general, but mere sensation, the pleasure of the moment. The good is, with him, purely sensuous. Self-control is indeed to be cultivated, but merely as a means to pleasure. The desires are to be ordered, but merely because by so doing the pleasures of sensation may be more certainly secured and more safely enjoyed. The Hedonism of Aristippus is noteworthy, for it is probably the most logical and consistent of all Hedonist systems.

The very simplicity and consistency of the Cyrenaic Ethics was enough to reveal its insufficiency. In the philosophy of Epicurus an effort was made to give to Hedonism a larger grasp of life. This was done by giving a new definition of pleasure. It is no longer the pleasure

of the moment which is said to be the object of human effort. The end of life is happiness, an enduring condition of tranquil enjoyment, a condition which is impossible except for the man who possesses self-control and moderation. Happiness is not to be found in luxury and extravagance, but in a life according to nature.

It is useful to turn for a moment to ancient Hedonism. The glance serves to reveal the true tendency of any doctrine which makes pleasure the good. Pure Hedonism, if it is consistent, must be Egoism, for pleasure as such can have no value except to the man who feels it. The ethical philosophy of Epicurus is a refined egoism and nothing more. Even friendship, though it is extolled to the skies, is merely a means to private happiness.

§ 2. Modern Hedonism.

If ancient Hedonism was frankly consistent in its adherence to its fundamental principle, modern Hedonism is, for the most part, splendidly inconsistent. There has been but one writer of consequence—Hobbes—who dared to make private pleasure the sole end and sole criterion of conduct. No consistently Egoistic theory could obtain wide acceptance in modern life. The genius of modern democracy forbids it. But the old pleasure standard remained in sight. It commended itself to Locke, and to the fellow-countrymen of Locke, because it seemed level with common sense; and the history of English Ethics became the history of a compromise. Compromise usually succeeds in England; and Utilitarianism, as the ethical compromise was called, was no exception to the rule. It was a great and glorious success. It became identified with magnificent social and political reforms. And, most remarkable of all, it triumphed just because of its inconsistency. The democratic principle which, in

defiance of logic, was grafted on to the pleasure-theory became the real source of its power and popularity.[1]

Before entering upon the examination of Utilitarianism, it is necessary to spend a short space upon the Hedonistic position in general.

§ 3. The Speculative Basis of Hedonism.

The strength of Hedonism resides in its appeal to common sense. Ask any plain man what is the end of conduct, and he will probably at first find himself very much puzzled to know what precisely the question means. Suggest to him that the end is happiness, and his difficulty will seem to vanish in a moment. For what is desirable but happiness? What else do men actually desire? Such moral aphorisms as he may have heard will probably lead the same way. He will remember that honesty is the best policy, and that he has always been taught that goodness leads to happiness. When, further, he is asked to consider what happiness is, he will find it hard to withhold assent from that definition of it which explains it in terms of pleasure. Again, ask him why he does his duty, and he will say, Because it is right. Ask him what makes it right, and he will probably be unable to answer. But put the matter to him thus: Is it not because it gives you more pleasure or less pain to do your duty than to leave it undone? And he will most likely assent at once.

In this way it is often argued that saint and sinner, martyr and voluptuary, are all moved by pleasure. Pleasure, it is maintained, is the sole end of conduct, and therefore the sole criterion of morality. The basis of Hedonism is the assumption that the object of desire is always pleasure.

§ 4. Pleasure the end of Conduct.

Regarded in the abstract this assumption seems reasonable enough. Its unsoundness is seen only when it is brought

[1] See Green, *Prolegomena*, bk. iv. chap. iii.

to the light of any concrete instance. Hunger, for example, is the desire for food (or, rather, the desire to be eating), not the desire for the pleasure which accompanies the act of eating. The desire "terminates upon its object."

It may, however, be said that the object is really a means, the true end is pleasure. The object is sought merely because its attainment brings pleasure. But this argument is a fallacy. The pleasure exists because the object of the desire is attained. The pleasure, that is, presupposes the existence of the desire, and therefore cannot be the end of the desire. To maintain the opposite is to make the "mistake of supposing that a desire can be excited by the anticipation of its own satisfaction."[1] A man finds pleasure in the satisfaction of his desire, because he has first had the desire. Or, as Bishop Butler puts it, "That all particular appetites and passions are, towards *external things themselves*, distinct from the *pleasure arising from them* is manifested from hence, that there could not be this pleasure, were it not for that prior suitableness between the object and the passion: there could be no enjoyment or delight for one thing more than another, from eating food more than from swallowing a stone, if there were not an affection or appetite to one thing more than another."[2]

In general, the mistake of Hedonism seems to be a confusion of self-satisfaction with pleasure. Self-satisfaction is the true end of all volition. Pleasure, as a rule, accompanies self-satisfaction; but is not even an index to the value of any particular satisfaction. For some of the objects of desire which, when obtained, yield most pleasure

[1] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 168.

[2] Butler, first sermon on "The Love of our Neighbour."

are among the least satisfying. Self-satisfaction is found in the concrete. It is self and its corresponding object in conjunction. It is self in action, in the exercise of what is, under the circumstances, its proper function. Pleasure, on the other hand, is an abstraction. It is the sensational element taken out of its surroundings and reflected on. There is a very common observation that the more any one looks for satisfaction in mere pleasure, in the sensational element in experience, the less satisfaction he receives. In pursuing pleasure, satisfaction is lost. The reason is now apparent. Satisfaction is only to be found in activity, in the exercise of function. When a man turns to pleasure, he turns his back upon the true source of satisfaction. It is further worthy of consideration that the more perfect the union of subject and object in activity, the more perfect the satisfaction. Time never flies so swiftly, life is never so real, so intense, as when the whole interest of the man is given to the object, and pleasure and pain are alike forgotten.

§ 5. Pleasure as the Criterion of Conduct.

So far we have discussed the claim of pleasure to be the sole End of conduct. It is also necessary to consider the claim of pleasure to be the sole Criterion of conduct.

The [illegible] that occurs on this subject is that the two claims are inconsistent. If pleasure were the sole end of conduct, it could provide no basis for moral distinctions. All acts aim at pleasure; the motive of action, that is, is always the same; therefore all acts are equally moral or equally immoral. It was pointed out above, that "self-satisfaction is the form of every object willed"; and on that ground it was shown that no distinction in the quality of actions could be founded on the mere *form* of activity. Moral distinctions must be based on the nature of the

objects in which the man seeks self-satisfaction. Now, if these objects are all identical, if pleasure is the sole end, every possible ground of distinction is cut away.

The only possible answer to this is to deny that the motive of an act has anything to do with its morality, and this answer is actually given.[1] The goodness of an act depends, it is said, on its external consequences. If the act leads to pleasure it is good, no matter what the motive may have been. In fact, the only element in a good act which cannot rightly be called good, is the so-called "Good Will" from which it sprang. It would be impossible to imagine anything more contrary to common opinion than such a conclusion. It can hardly be said of such a doctrine as this that it is level with common sense, or that it justifies the moral experience of mankind.

§ 6. Quality of Pleasure.

This crude form of Hedonism leads to one result which has given much trouble to those who have adopted it as their point of departure in ethical study. It seems to reduce those elements in life which are generally considered the noblest to the same level with the gratification of appetite. Are all pleasures equally valuable, and, if not, is the only ground of distinction to be found in relative intensity and duration? Are the gratifications of intellect and of virtue superior to those of the flesh in degree of pleasurableness only?

Waiving the question as to the probable result of an investigation of the comparative pleasurableness of virtue and a cautious self-indulgence, let it be noted that the moment any principle, other than mere quantity, is employed for the valuation of pleasures, the Hedonist position is abandoned. That moment Pleasure ceases to be the

[1] Bentham and Mill. See *Utilitarianism*, p. 26.

criterion of morality. The true criterion is the new principle which has been called in for the purpose of discriminating between pleasures.

It is strange that so able a thinker as J. S. Mill should not have perceived this. "If I am asked," he writes, "what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity, as to render it, in comparison, of small account. . . . A being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy, is capable probably of more acute suffering, and is certainly accessible to it at more points, than one of inferior type; but, in spite of these liabilities, he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence. We may give what explanation we please of this unwillingness . . . but its most appropriate appellation is a sense of dignity, which all human beings possess in one form or other, and in some, though by no means in exact, proportion to their higher faculties, and which is so essential a part of the happiness of those in whom it is strong, that nothing which conflicts

with it could be, otherwise than momentarily, an object of desire to them."[1]

Thus, according to Mill, pleasures must be estimated by the approval of those who have felt them, and this approval is guided by a "sense of dignity." This "sense of dignity" is certainly a "moral sense," for it is the court of appeal to which moral difficulties must ultimately be referred. It is hard to distinguish such a doctrine from Intuitionalism. It is not Hedonism.

§ 7. The "Sum of Pleasures" Theory.

One other form of the Hedonist theory claims attention. The end of conduct is frequently said to be the greatest possible sum of pleasures. But, as pointed out by T. H. Green, a sum of pleasures is not a possibility either for feeling or for imagination. "If, then, desire is only for pleasure, *i.e.* for an enjoyment or feeling of pleasure, we are simply the victims of words when we talk of desire for a sum of pleasures, much more when we take the greatest imaginable sum to be the most desired. We are confusing a sum of pleasures as counted or combined in thought, with a sum of pleasures as felt or enjoyed, which is a nonentity."[2]

But surely, it will be said, every one looks forward, if not to a sum of pleasures, at least to a series of pleasures as an object of desire. What is the débutante's desire for the coming season, or the saint's desire for paradise, but a desire for a series of pleasures? The answer is easy. The desire for any series of events, conceived as enjoyable, is not desire for a number of sensations of pleasure abstracted from the matrix of concrete activity which contains them. The true object of desire is not the series of pleasures, but the activity which forms their occasion. What every one

[1] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 12, 13.

[2] Green, *Prolegomena*, bk. iii. chap. iv. § 221.

desires is a continuous state of activity, self finding its satisfaction in a whole world of concrete reality. "It is the realisation of those objects in which we are mainly interested, not the succession of enjoyments which we shall experience in realising them, that forms the definite content of our idea of true happiness, so far as it has such content at all."[1]

[1] Green, *Prolegomena*, bk. iii. chap. iv. § 228.

CHAPTER III

UTILITARIANISM

§ 1. The Principle of Utilitarianism.

UTILITARIANISM is Hedonism grown democratic. The most manifest difficulty of Hedonism is the difficulty of explaining the altruistic side of morality. If pleasure is the sole end of conduct and the sole criterion of its excellence, it follows inevitably that every man is bound to do the best for himself. But on what principle does it follow that he is also bound to do the best for others? It belongs to the very nature of pleasure, as such, to be of no value except to the person who feels it. It is true, of course, that the happiness of friends and companions is a means to private happiness. On this ground Epicurus regarded friendship as one of the principal elements in a happy life. But this is to reduce goodness to pure selfishness. It is a doctrine which cannot be even thought of without repugnance by any one who has imbibed the modern ethical spirit. And such a doctrine is as far as possible from the opinions of nineteenth-century Utilitarians. According to Mill, "The happiness which forms the Utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, Utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested

and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of Utilitarian morality."[1] Again, in the words of another distinguished modern writer, "By Utilitarianism is here meant the ethical theory that the conduct which, under any given circumstances, is objectively right, is that which will produce the greatest amount of happiness on the whole; that is, taking into account all whose happiness is affected by the conduct."[2]

§ 2. The Difficulty of Utilitarianism—Mill's Answer.

How, we must ask, do these two philosophers manage to pass from private happiness to general happiness? Their answers to this question must be considered briefly.

Mill's answer is as follows: "No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good; that each person's happiness is a good to that person; and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons."[3]

It is curious to find a logician falling into a logical blunder so portentous. The argument is a typical specimen of the fallacy of composition. If every person desires happiness for himself, it does not follow that he desires it for every one else. It follows rather, the means to pleasure

[1] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 24, 25. 18

[2] Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, p. 411.

[3] *Utilitarianism*, p. ~~53.~~ 33

being limited, that he will, if he can, take as much as possible for himself and leave others wanting. The following from Kant is an amusing commentary on Mill's argument :—"It is surprising that intelligent men could have thought of calling the desire of happiness a universal practical law on the ground that the desire is universal, and, therefore, also the maxim by which every one makes this desire determine his will. For whereas in other cases a universal law of nature makes everything harmonious; here, on the contrary, if we attribute to the maxim the universality of a law, the extreme opposite of harmony will follow, the greatest opposition, and the complete destruction of the maxim itself and its purpose." "In this manner, then, results a harmony like that which a certain satirical poem depicts as existing between a married couple bent on going to ruin, 'O marvellous harmony, what he wishes, she wishes also'; or like what is said of the pledge of Francis I. to the Emperor Charles V., 'What my brother Charles wishes that wish I also' (viz. Milan)."[1]

§ 3. Professor Sidgwick's Solution.

Professor Sidgwick escapes from Mill's difficulty by denying the doctrine which leads to it. For him, the good is not personal pleasure but universal happiness, and this end is to be aimed at because it is reasonable, not because each person, as a matter of fact, desires his own happiness. The difficulty about this "Universalistic Hedonism" is that it is hard to see how it is Hedonism at all. The popular expression, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number," would serve most ethical theories as a loose definition of the end. The distinction of theory from theory arises in the answering of the two questions, What is meant by happiness? and, Why must the happiness of the greatest

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* pp. 115, 116.

number be sought? To answer the latter question by saying, Because it is reasonable, is, in truth, to abandon the Hedonistic position. Why must man seek universal happiness, the common good? Because it is reasonable. Because, that is, it is the law of his being to do so. Pleasure is no longer the basis of morality, the basis is found in the man himself.[1]

It is now plain enough how it was that Utilitarianism was able to become the watchword of social and political reform. It was because it demanded, what on its own principles it had no right to demand, a common good, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In defiance of logic, it caught the ethical idea of the age, and, by its splendid inconsistency, triumphed over the very principles it professed.

[1] For full statement of the theory of Universalistic Hedonism, see Professor H. Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, book iii. chaps. xiii., xiv., and book iv. And for criticism, see Green, *op. cit.* pp. 406, etc.

CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

§ 1. Evolution and Ethics.

THE great stimulus given to scientific investigation of all kinds by the modern doctrine of Evolution has naturally had an influence upon the study of ethics. The "Ethics of Evolution," as the new views are called, have attracted much attention in the world at large. It would therefore be impossible to pass on without giving some space to a brief consideration of them. At the same time, it is not easy to say anything worth saying without entering into a detailed discussion of many conflicting opinions. To discuss Evolutionary Ethics in general is exceedingly difficult, because the conception of Evolution in general is indefinite, and because no two writers agree sufficiently as to the main outlines of an ethical theory of the sort.

The fact is, however, that, for the future, no one who attempts to investigate the problems presented by a view of human conduct can regard society as static, or treat the conditions of human action as fixed. If Ethics is to put a measure to the doings of men, it must be a measure which will, from its very nature, adapt itself to constant movement. And so, in Part II. of this little book, the moral standard has been shown to be a moving standard, and the history of conduct has been shown to be a great development.

Yet withal it is to be noted that it was possible to find neither the man who seeks, nor the good which is sought, among the products of Evolution. The Evolution is to be referred to "the Good," not the Good to the Evolution.

§ 2. Characteristics of Evolutionary Ethics.

The type of theory which now awaits examination is precisely opposite in principle. Both the man and his good are regarded as products of Evolution. The theory builds upon those doctrines of physical and biological development which have now attained so secure a position. Man is the highest of the animals; and his so-called spiritual activities have had their rise, it is contended, according to laws which have been fairly well ascertained, from the sentient life of animals. Mr. Spencer does not hesitate to group together under the head of conduct the voluntary action of men and the behaviour of the cephalopod, which—"now crawling over the beach, now exploring the rocky crevices, now swimming through the open water, now darting after a fish, now hiding itself from some larger animal in a cloud of ink, and using its suckered arms at one time for anchoring itself and at another for holding fast its prey; selects and combines and proportions its movements from minute to minute, so as to evade dangers which threaten, while utilising chances of food which offer; so showing us varied activities which, in achieving special ends, achieve the general end of securing the continuance of the activities."[1] The sentient life of animals, again, had its rise, in some unexplained fashion, from the living organism, and the organism from the crystal.

It would be possible, of course, to run over at length the common criticism of this theory, and point out that it

[1] Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, chap. ii. § 4.

fails at certain epochs, that to pass from the crystal to the living organism, and from the living organism to the sentient creature, is to leap chasm after chasm of unexplained, and, on principles of Evolution, unexplainable difficulty. A more important, because more general, criticism is afforded by the consideration that Evolution is a succession of relations in time, and demands therefore the spiritual principle —the self-conscious subject—as the presupposition of its possibility.

But these are criticisms of the claim of Evolution to be considered a sufficient explanation of spiritual facts and phenomena in general. At present, the precise inquiry is: Can the theory of Evolution, as presented by Darwin, Spencer, and others, be made the basis of a theory of Ethics? The answer to this question seems to be a decided negative.

§ 3. The Social Organism.

The most characteristic, as well as the most valuable, of the conceptions popularised by Evolutionary Ethics is the idea of the social organism. Man is not man except as a member of a society of some kind. Society is not merely an environment in which the man lives, it is an environment which makes him what he is. It is a structure of which each man forms a part, and which in turn determines each part. All that a man has, in the way of bodily or mental faculty or individuality, he has by reason of the relations in which he stands to society as a whole. The past history of society affects him by heredity, the present condition of society affects him as environment. Society gives form to the man, just as the men taken all together form the society.[1]

[1] On this see Leslie Stephen, *Science of Ethics*, chap. iii. Mr. Spencer is weak here. See Appendix ii. to part i.

But society is compared to a living organism, not merely because the whole conditions the parts and the parts the whole, but also because it grows "by reaction upon its environment." Like species of plants and animals, society alters and develops according to circumstances. And this process of alteration and development takes place according to the same law which presides over the origination of species. The survival of the fittest is the rule of progress for social organisms, as well as for animal or vegetable organisms. The society which is best adapted to its environment holds its own against all competitors, and ensures its own existence and well-being. The society which is ill equipped for the struggle perishes. In the conflict which takes place between races and communities of men, and in the war which men must wage against nature, are found the primary conditions of social progress. The success of any society depends, of course, upon its internal constitution, the articulation of its parts, the relations which subsist between the members. A community composed of "a strong social tissue prevails."

§ 4. Ethics and Natural Selection.

Now the bond which ties society together is ethical. The more the individual man subordinates his own self-seeking desires to the general welfare, the stronger the society to which he belongs becomes. So that the strength of a community depends upon its internal ethical condition. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." The public-spirited man who prefers the commonweal to his own private advantage, is the man who gives strength to his people and therefore victory. But Evolution abounds in compensations. The advantage of the society is not left to the highmindedness of individuals. Those races in which self-restraint for the common good is more irksome, and therefore less fre-

quent, are killed off, while those races in which self-restraint for the common good is less irksome, and therefore more frequent, survive; so that ultimately Evolution tends to produce a race in which private inclination and public good are coincident.

§ 5. Criticism.

It is not pretended that this theory is not well worthy of consideration, and may not be a valuable addition to ethical science. The point which is now put forward is that, if this Evolutionist explanation be regarded as ultimate, a curious consequence follows. The ethical mode of life is altogether subservient to the unethical. Man is moral that he may be immoral. He loves his friend that he may the better slay his enemy. Evil is not a sub-contrary to Good, as Plato imagined; Good is rather a sub-contrary to Evil. We do good that evil may come, and thereby live according to Nature. In Nature, the law of progress is strife; conflict, bloodshed, competition, the methods of the "tiger and the ape," are supreme. In the society which is best, because it has slain its enemies in the past and will slay all enemies in the future, reign love, joy, peace, and long-suffering.[1] And yet, after all, this best society is a pitiful spectacle. What is it but a handful of combatants who, because chance has hustled them together in a certain way, become coherent, and so contrive to hold their ground a little longer than others who, with them, are engaged in the age-long battle of nature? No wonder one of the ablest exponents of Evolution brushes aside the optimism of writers like Mr. Spencer, and declares "That the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process,

[1] This is implicitly denied by Mr. H. Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, p. 19, but no reason given why the principle of competition should disappear finally without degeneration.

still less in running away from it, but in combating it." [1] The direct result of Evolutionary Ethics, when logically worked out, is to set the ethical man in hopeless antagonism to nature. Goodness is rebellion against the universe. The good man is the true Prometheus who hurls defiance at the Eternal, and wars without chance of success against the endless process of the Cosmos.

Such a conclusion as this reduces the whole doctrine to an absurdity, for it means that nature is at war with herself. When the ethical man, the most perfect child of nature, appears, he emerges the incarnate contradiction of the mother that bore him. The event will not, however, surprise any one who grasps the full significance of the assumptions with which the Evolutionist enters upon his argument. If there is a contradiction involved in the premises, there will be a contradiction somewhere in the conclusion. If logic has been ignored at the start, it is not likely to be found at the finish. The Evolutionist assumes nature to be an intelligible scheme, to be rational, but ignores the fact that every rational system must be relative to some *End*. That is, he treats nature as both rational and irrational at the same time. His conclusion is, of course, equally inconsistent. If nature is to be understood at all, it must be rational, and must therefore be relative to an end which is good; and the ethical man derives his strength from this very thing that he is in harmony with the supreme law of the universe.

§ 6. Evolutionist Doctrine of the Self.

The Evolutionist doctrine of the self is involved in the conception of Society which has just been considered. The self is not regarded as an ultimate principle of unity. Its unity is derivative, for it is constituted by the society

[1] Huxley, *Romanes Lecture*, p. 34.

to which it belongs. The individual man is made what he is, as a unit in an ethical system, by all the past and present circumstances and conditions of the society. Considered in himself, he is, in truth, an abstraction; the concrete reality is the organic whole, the Society.[1] This doctrine of the Self is a direct consequence of existing evolutionary theories, yet it has not been as distinctly formulated by Evolutionist writers as by others. It is a one-sided view of a most important truth. As already explained, the individuality of man can only develop itself in a society, self can only be realised in the realisation of a community in which the end of one is the end of all. At the same time the self-hood of the individual must not be regarded as constituted by his environment. The body of a man may be an eddy in the stream of cosmic evolution, but the man as a self, a spirit, cannot; for the stream only exists for him as constituted by him. This side of things is, however, ignored by the Evolutionist; with him the spirit of man is not, for the man, the ultimate unit. Self loses its true self-hood. It becomes a stage in a process, an element in a complex whole, a member of the social organism. The real difference between the two doctrines is best seen by considering the nature of the bond which unites the persons who form society. According to the theory adopted here, the bond is intrinsic and transcendent—intrinsic, because the cosmos is for every man as he makes it, and yet there is but one cosmos; transcendent, because no man can get behind his own personality. If there is a bond of union among Persons, it must be intrinsic and transcendent.

[1] This view is well expounded by Mr. Muirhead, *op. cit.* book chap. iii., and book iv. chap. i.

The Evolutionist doctrine is a much simpler one to grasp. The union among persons is extrinsic. In the course of cosmic evolution certain organisms have been jostled into proximity to one another. Chance has thrown them together in such a way that a certain equilibrium of function has been established among them. By means of this new condition they are able to withstand the disintegrating action of cosmic forces better than other organisms which are not so combined. Different groups of these organisms, slightly varying in the degrees of their internal stability, come into conflict. The most stable groups survive. As this advance takes place, complexity of internal arrangement in the group increases, and the individual organism becomes more and more dependent upon the whole group. The individuals and the group and the connexions between them (the whole system, in fact) have been formed by the pressure of external circumstances. The union is extrinsic.

Can such a theory be made a foundation for a doctrine of morals? Can ethics be the science which deals with the conditions of internal stability in the group of organisms called society?

§ 7. Evolutionist Account of the Good.

Such a science as this, however valuable in itself, would not be a moral science at all. It would not concern the Good. Morality, whether as a matter of science or of practice, deals with a quality of conduct which is commonly termed either the good or the right. Evolution can account for neither. The Evolutionist account of the *right* will be considered later. At present let it be noted that the *good* is not explicable on principles of Evolution. The Good is essentially personal. It is by its very nature an *End*. But an End exists only for a

Person, a self-conscious subject. The moment the conception of *End* is introduced the natural order is reversed, the future governs the present, an idea of a state of things not yet realised becomes the controlling principle of action. But this is unmeaning if the self of a man is the creature of circumstances, a stage in a process, a determination of physical causes. How can man break through the conditions of time and determine the present by the future, if he is but a stage in the process of physical Evolution? The physical conception of the self as a member in a social organism, and nothing more, destroys the very conception of *the good*, and reduces Ethics to the natural history of conduct. Evolutionary Ethics has no right to speak of what *ought to be*, only of what *is*. If it is consistent, it is a science of matters of fact, not a science of ends or of duty.

The question, however, may be asked, Does the Evolutionary account of ethical facts supply a basis for a theory of Ethics? Is it not possible to find out what is, and then use the knowledge gained for the purpose of supplying rules for future guidance? This question has been answered in part already. It needs further discussion, however, because the answer to it will bring out certain difficulties which lie in the way of any attempt to justify morality from the standpoint of Evolution. Nature, as all know, is "careful of the type" and "careless of the single life." The individual organism meets with no kindness at the hands of Nature. In building up one good type, countless myriads of individuals are sacrificed. The more perfect the type, the more does it bear the marks of the myriad sacrifices which have been made for its perfection. The principle applies to the

social organism as much as to any other organism. Nay, it applies with multiplied force, because the strife which has turned out a good type of society is a strife among societies. Even societies of men are nothing accounted of in nature; of what account, then, is the individual? Of course it is easy to say that every man must be precious to himself. True, but the point which is now of consequence is, that Evolution provides no reason why his neighbours should be precious to him, except in so far as they safeguard his own welfare. Evolution furnishes no common good in the sense in which a common good is demanded by morality. It may perhaps furnish a common good in this sense, that each man's welfare may, from his point of view, appear to be one with the welfare of the whole community.[1] But it does not identify each man's welfare with *every other* man's welfare. From the standpoint of the community, the individual, as such, has no absolute value. If any individual is by natural defect a source of weakness to the social organism, why should his private welfare be considered? Why should not cripples, imbeciles, and incurables be chloroformed? The only answer the Evolutionist can give is, because feelings of benevolence, which have arisen in the course of development and which help to bind society together, forbid. But why should these feelings be obeyed? Why should not justice, the feeling of what is due to the community as a whole, overcome the follies of benevolence? Why should not the progress

[1] How easy it would be to make out a very good case to prove that this appearance is an illusion will be evident to every student of the writings of the modern pessimists, and to every reader of Mr. Kidd's *Social Evolution*.

of enlightenment lead to a new adjustment of feelings, and why should it not come to be regarded a duty to weed out those unfortunates whose presence is injurious to the health of the whole community? No answer can be given to these inquiries. Evolution, in fact, destroys the absolute ethical value of the individual. Man, as man, ceases to be an end in himself, he becomes a means to the improvement of the type and to the building up of the community.

It is a curious consequence of the "Ethics of Evolution" that, if the doctrine be true, the less any one knows of the science of Ethics the better for his morals.

Suppose a man who is hesitating between a selfish and an unselfish action to ask himself, "Why should I sacrifice myself in this way? Why should I give up my own pleasure?" The answer, on principles of Evolution, will be, Because by sacrificing yourself in the gratification of special desires, you contribute to the well-being of the social organism as a whole. "But why should I seek to contribute to the well-being of the social organism as a whole?" Because your own well-being depends upon the well-being of the social organism of which you are a member. Thus unselfishness is reduced to a more refined kind of selfishness. The difficulty which perplexes the Hedonist is just as perplexing to the Evolutionist. Only one way of escape seems possible, and that is actually attempted. Benevolent feeling, sympathy, is a genuine product of Evolution. It is a characteristic of the social (*i.e.* the ethical) man. It is part of his being. It performs an important office in assisting to hold society together. When a man yields to sympathy, he yields to that which is essentially ethical.[1] He is good, because he

[1] Stephen, *op. cit.* p. 429.

is following the guidance of a principle whose general tendency is to strengthen the social organism. That is, the simple, unlearned man who obeys the command of his sympathies is the moral man. Imagine, on the other hand, a person of keen analytical intellect, well versed in the "Ethics of Evolution," not relying on the blind guidance of his sympathies, but working out for himself the "right and wrong" of each case. Such a man will estimate every action by its tendency to maintain or further the well-being of the social organism. He will crush his sympathies, or deliberately alter their channel, whenever he sees they are leading him to a course of action injurious to society. He will, if he can trust his judgment sufficiently, decree the destruction of the deformed or mentally defective, because he is so well acquainted with the conditions of progress and the laws of heredity that he knows all such variations may become injurious to the social organism, if a widely-spread feeling of sympathy for suffering should preserve them alive. Nature has decreed the destruction of the unfit, the wise man will not dissent from so prudent a decision.

§ 8. Evolutionist Account of Duty.

The same result attends a practical application of the Evolutionary account of duty. Mr. Spencer founds his account of obligation on the account previously given by Professor Bain. Obligation, or "the element of coerciveness," "originates from experience of those several forms of restraint that have established themselves in the course of civilisation —the political, religious, and social. . . . Accepting, in the main, the view that fears of the political and social penalties (to which, I think, the religious must be added) have generated that sense of coerciveness which goes along with the thought of postponing present to future, and personal

desires to the claims of others, it here chiefly concerns us to note that this sense of coerciveness becomes indirectly connected with the feelings distinguished as moral. For, since the political, religious, and social restraining motives are mainly formed of represented future results, and since the moral restraining motive is mainly formed of represented future results, it happens that the representations having much in common, and being often aroused at the same time, the fear joined with three sets of them becomes, by association, joined with the fourth. Thinking of the extrinsic effects of a forbidden act excites a dread which continues present while the intrinsic effects of the act are thought of; and, being thus linked with these intrinsic effects, causes a vague sense of moral compulsion. Emerging, as the moral motive does, but slowly from amidst the political, religious, and social motives, it long participates in that consciousness of subordination to some external agency which is joined with them; and only as it becomes distinct and predominant does it lose this associated consciousness—only then does the feeling of obligation fade. This remark implies the tacit conclusion, which will be to most very startling, that the sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory, and will diminish as fast as moralisation increases."[1]

The sense of obligation, then, the recognition of the necessity of good conduct, is merely a feeling accidentally attached to morality. When a man feels the awfulness of sin, or does his duty because to leave the duty undone would be to incur the penalty of self-condemnation, he is the victim of the tyrants and priests who oppressed his ancestors. His ancestors trembled at the thought of the

[1] *Data of Ethics*, chap. vii. § 46.

punishments which would be inflicted upon them if they transgressed the commandment. He trembles, because the old association between trangression and fear is ingrained in his mental constitution. Duty is the ghost of primeval compulsion. "As moralisation increases," the ghost fades out of sight and the man does his duty, because he finds it is the way to get most life or most happiness for the community and for himself.

Here, again, it is quite evident that the less a man knows of ethical science the better for his morals. If the sense of obligation is the result of an accidental association—a result, too, which must disappear with the progress of knowledge and civilisation—what is there to make or to justify a moral hero or martyr? What is there to control hot passions when the law commands? What is there to stimulate to great endeavours when the "right" course is clearly seen? The man who is so simple and uninstructed that he takes the voice of duty for a Divine voice speaking through his own reason with an imperative which he cannot disregard without self-condemnation, will do great deeds. But the man who is so well acquainted with ethical science that he knows the imperative to be but a far-off echo of the command of the tyrant and the priest, will have but little to move him to obedience in the face of difficulty internal or external.

But, in truth, the Evolutionary doctrine of obligation is untenable, quite apart from the fact that it fails to justify morality. Might cannot make right for this sufficient reason, that when might becomes a means of education it presupposes right. It appeals to that element in man which responds to the claim of authority. Why does a multitude of savage men submit to the authority of the

chieftain or the priest? It is not because the chieftain or the priest is stronger than the multitude. It is because every man in the multitude tacitly acknowledges the fact that community is a means of good, and that community is impossible without authority. If *right* had to wait until *might* should make it, it would never be made at all. The idea of a *good* which the man may obtain for himself, and the conviction that this *good* is somehow common to himself with others, must precede the formation of any society of men, if men are to be regarded as conscious agents. But a society of some sort must exist before *might* can obtain a field for its exercise. A strong individual may wound or slay a weak individual; but no individual, no matter how strong he may be, can have power over a multitude unless the multitude recognise his *authority*. Punishment, in the true sense, is only possible where social arrangements already exist.

§ 9. Evolutionary Hedonism.

It would be impossible to bring this brief criticism to a close without touching upon the union of Hedonism with Evolution.

Mr. Herbert Spencer is the chief authority for this combination. All through the *Data of Ethics* there runs a curious dualism, which is so apparent that it gives the impression of there being some deep principle hidden behind it. With reluctance and amazement the reader is at last compelled to regard it as a mere inconsistency.

Near the beginning of the book it is asserted that "increased duration of life . . . constitutes the supreme end."[1] It is afterwards added that "length of life is not by itself a

[1] *Data of Ethics*, p. 14. It is noteworthy that Mr. H. Spencer constantly drifts into teleological language. In strictness, a writer who builds simply on "process" has no right to use language of this sort.

measure of evolution of conduct; but that quantity of life must be taken into account." "Estimating life by multiplying its length into its breadth, we must say that the augmentation of it which accompanies evolution of conduct results from increase of both factors." The end is then fulness, "greatest totality," of life. In the very next chapter the end of conduct is differently described. "There is one postulate in which pessimists and optimists agree. Both their arguments assume it to be self-evident that life is good or bad, according as it does, or does not, bring a surplus of agreeable feeling. The pessimist says he condemns life, because it results in more pain than pleasure. The optimist defends life in the belief that it brings more pleasure than pain. Each makes the kind of sentiency which accompanies life the test. They agree that the justification of life as a state of being turns on this issue—whether the average consciousness rises above indifference-point into pleasurable feeling or falls below it into painful feeling."[1] "No school can avoid taking for the ultimate moral aim *a desirable state of feeling* called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness."[2]

Perhaps, however, the contradiction may be merely verbal. Perhaps the doctrine which Mr. Spencer really holds is that pleasure is the ultimate end and fulness of life the means to pleasure. Such an interpretation seems to be distinctly warranted by several passages. For instance he concludes that "If we call good the conduct conducive to life, we can do so only with the implication that it is conducive to a surplus of pleasures over pain." "Every other proposed standard of conduct derives its authority from this standard"[3] (*i.e.* from the

[1] *Data of Ethics*, pp. 27, 28. [2] *Ibid.* p. 46. [3] *Ibid.* p. 45.

pleasure standard). Such expressions would be quite conclusive as to Mr. Spencer's meaning, but for the fact that they conflict with an essential part of his theory.

One of Mr. Spencer's most striking contributions to the study of ethical phenomena is his account of the relation of function to pleasure. "Pains," he teaches, "are the correlatives of actions injurious to the organism, while pleasures are the correlatives of actions conducive to its welfare"; since "it is an inevitable deduction from the hypothesis of Evolution that races of sentient creatures could have come into existence under no other conditions." "If the states of consciousness which a creature endeavours to maintain are the correlatives of injurious actions, and if the states of consciousness which it endeavours to expel are the correlatives of beneficial actions, it must quickly disappear through persistence in the injurious, and avoidance of the beneficial. In other words, those races of beings only can have survived in which, on the average, agreeable or desired feelings went along with activities conducive to the maintenance of life, while disagreeable and habitually-avoided feelings went along with activities directly or indirectly destructive of life."[1] "At the very outset life is maintained by persistence in acts which conduce to it, and desistance from acts which impede it; and whenever sentiency makes its appearance as an accompaniment, its forms must be such that in the one case the produced feeling is of a kind that will be sought—pleasure, and in the other case is of a kind that will be shunned—pain."[2]

Thus pleasure is not the true end of the activities of the organism. The true end is the maintenance of life.

[1] *Principles of Psychology*, §§ 124, 125.

[2] *Data of Ethics*, p. 79.

Pleasure is but a means to this end, and, moreover, it is not even necessarily a means. The connexion between pleasure and life is not intrinsic. It is simply the result of external adjustment, and must, because Evolution implies constant movement, be more or less imperfect. The relation of pleasure to that fulness of life which is "the supreme end" is only a greater or less coincidence.

Further reflection reveals the fact that all through Mr. Spencer assumes that the exercise of function, and therefore the impulse to exercise function, precedes the feeling of pleasure. No matter when sentiency, and therefore the capacity to pursue pleasure as an end, makes its appearance, it presupposes an organism fitted to maintain its existence by the exercise of function, and actually maintaining its existence in this way in obedience to impulses to action according to circumstances. The great difficulty of the Hedonist position is unavoidable. No escape is to be had by ascending the stream of Evolution.

The whole inconsistency of Mr. Spencer's position seems to arise from the fact that, in spite of his principles, he identifies the end of the conscious individual with the end to which the process of Evolution is relative. There is no doubt that the identification is necessary, if there is to be such a thing as a science of Ethics. But the question is, Do Mr. Spencer's principles justify him in making the identification? The answer must be a decided negative, and for two reasons. First, because he adopts from the old-fashioned Hedonism the maxim that the moral end is and must be pleasure. Secondly, because, by making mere process the ultimate principle of explanation, he has debarred himself from the right to consider that Evolution is relative to any end.

CHAPTER V

FORMAL ETHICS

§ 1. Kant's Ethical Doctrine.

THE Formal, or Kantian, Ethics contrast strikingly with the Hedonist theories which have just been considered. The Hedonist makes the character of the action to depend upon its consequences; the Kantian, on the other hand, denies that the consequences, whether foreseen or unforeseen, have anything to do with the morality of conduct. It was shown above that the formal side of volition affords no means of estimating the character of action, and that consequently if any distinction is to be made, the criterion must be found in the object willed, in the nature of the end in which the self seeks satisfaction. This position is denied by Kant. He declares that "the purposes which we may have in view in our actions, or their effects regarded as ends and springs of the will, cannot give to actions any unconditional or moral worth."[1] The end does not give character to the act. Hence Kant's theory is not a theory of "the good." It is primarily a theory of "duty."

He reaches this position in the following way.

Goodness is an attribute of the will only. "Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will.

[1] See Kant's *Theory of Ethics* (Dr. Abbott's translation), 3rd ed. p. 16.

. . . A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself." Even "if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing . . . then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself." [1]

The good will cannot be moved by any object of inclination or desire. "All objects of the inclinations have only a conditional worth, for if the inclinations and the wants founded on them did not exist, then their object would be without value. But the inclinations themselves, being sources of want, are so far from having an absolute worth for which they should be desired, that, on the contrary, it must be the universal wish of every rational being to be wholly free from them." [2] This essentially ascetic estimate of the inclinations arises from the view which Kant took of the relation between will and pleasure. When the will is moved by any object of inclination or desire, "then," according to Kant, "what determines the choice is the idea of an object, and that relation of this idea to the subject by which its faculty of desire is determined to its realisation. Such a relation to the subject is called the pleasure in the existence of an object. This, then, must be presupposed as a condition of the possibility of determination of the will." Again, "Pleasure arising from the idea of the existence of a thing, in so far as it is to determine the desire of this thing, is founded on the *susceptibility* of the subject, since it depends on the presence of an object; hence it belongs to sense (feeling) and not to understanding, which expresses a relation of the idea to an

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* pp. 9, 10. [2] *Ibid.* p. 46.

object according to concepts, not to the subject according to feelings. It is then practical only in so far as the faculty of desire is determined by the sensation of agreeableness which the subject expects from the actual existence of the object."[1] To admit, that is, that the good will can be moved by regard for objects of desire, reduces morality to self-love in the sense of pleasure-seeking. "All material principles, then, which place the determining ground of the will in the pleasure or pain to be received from the existence of any object are of the same kind, inasmuch as they all belong to the principle of self-love or private happiness."[2] But, for Kant, this only proves that material principles can never be truly moral principles. The moral principle must be formal.

Hence it is evident that Kant agrees with the Hedonists that the true end which is sought in every gratification of particular desires and inclinations is pleasure, but draws from this doctrine a conclusion exactly the opposite of the Hedonist conclusion. It is also evident that Kant carries over into his practical philosophy those permanent antagonisms of sense and understanding, matter and form, which are so marked in his critical philosophy.

The good will can find no motive in any object of desire. Its motive must lie in itself. It must be purely formal. It must be regard to *mere law*. "The pre-eminent good which we call moral can therefore consist in nothing else than *the conception of law* in itself."[3] The peculiarity of the good will is, then, not merely that it conforms to the law, but that it finds its motive in the conception of law as such. But how can this conception of law in general serve as a principle to guide the will in

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* p. 108. [2] *Ibid.* p. 109. [3] *Ibid.* p. 17.

particular cases, how can it become applicable to concrete acts? To this inquiry Kant has a ready answer. The idea of law in general is the idea of universality. Thus emerges the principle: "I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law. Here, now, it is the simple conformity to law in general, without assuming any particular law applicable to certain actions, that serves the will as its principle."[1]

Kant arrives at the same conclusion by a consideration of the nature of a categorical imperative. "When I conceive a categorical imperative, I know at once what it contains. For as the imperative contains, besides the law, only the necessity that the maxims shall conform to this law, while the law contains no conditions restricting it, there remains nothing but the general statement, that the maxim of the action should conform to a universal law, and it is this conformity alone that the imperative properly represents as necessary. There is therefore but one categorical imperative, namely this: Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[2]

Kant illustrates his doctrine by taking some sample cases: a man reduced to despair by a series of misfortunes, and contemplating suicide; another, borrowing money which he knows he will not be able to repay; a third, inclined to neglect the development of his powers through self-indulgence; a fourth, a prosperous man disinclined to relieve the misery of others. In all these cases Kant shows that it is impossible to *will* that the principles involved in these courses of conduct "should have the

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* p. 18. [2] *Ibid.* p. 38.

universal validity of a law of nature. For a will which resolved this would contradict itself. . . . We must be able *to will* that a maxim of our action should be a universal law."[1]

§ 2. Objections.

There are objections to Kant's theory which are quite insuperable.

If the moral principle is to be found in mere formal universality it is practically worthless. There is nothing to move to action and make good conduct possible. Volition without some desire or interest to furnish the matter of the act is impossible. A man cannot act apart from the desires and interests which he actually possesses. A purely formal exercise of the will is no more possible than a concrete world constructed out of the empty forms of thought. Truth is to be found in the concrete. Bring Kant's ethical theory down to the test of the concrete, and its unsoundness becomes apparent. And so it was shown above that moral conduct is to be found in the ordering of the desires according to some law or principle, not in getting rid of the desires altogether. In Kant's opinion "it must be the universal wish of every rational being to be wholly free from" the inclinations. As a matter of fact, however, freedom from all inclination would be absolute incapacity of action. The Oriental ascetic who seeks the loss of conscious existence in order to extinguish desire is really more consistent than Kant, because he recognises that the attainment of this end would involve the extinction of self, and regards that very extinction as the climax of

[1] In some cases Kant contents himself with showing that it is impossible to *conceive* the maxim of an immoral act to have universal validity. For the sake of simplicity, we have confined our attention to the general statement of his canon which, of course, covers all cases. See *op. cit.* p. 41.

bliss. He seeks a universal in which his own personality shall cease. Self does not find its realisation in pure form, but in concrete reality, the perfect union of form and matter.

It is quite plain that Kant felt the difficulty of his position, for he endeavoured to escape from it by demanding one feeling as a rational ground of action, the feeling of respect or reverence for the law. "This feeling," he says, "on account of its origin, must be called, not a pathological, but a practical effect,"[1] because it has its origin in the pure practical reason. But the question is not, what is its origin, but what is its nature? And in its nature, it is just as pathological (*i.e.* sensuous) as any other feeling. Kant has no right to take this one feeling and set it apart as having a moral value altogether different from other feelings. It would be possible to name many other feelings by help of which men do good and great actions—love, friendship, patriotism, etc. Why should it be moral to be guided by reverence for the law, immoral to be guided by friendship or love? These latter feelings are often much more efficacious than mere respect for the law in doing the work which Kant specially assigns to his favourite feeling; the work, that is, of removing out of the way the resistance which other feelings may offer to the law.[2]

§ 3. The Principal Fault of the Kantian Ethics.

The first great fault of the Kantian Ethics is, then, the fault of making a vicious abstraction. The mere form of good conduct is abstracted from the concrete whole, with the result of removing morality far from the actual practice of men. "An absolutely good will," according to Kant, "will contain merely the *form* of volition generally,"[3] and is therefore, it may be added, an impossibility.

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* p. 168. [2] *Ibid.* p. 167. [3] *Ibid.* p. 63.

It has been already remarked that Kant carries over into his Ethical Philosophy the great error of his speculative thinking, the separation, namely, of sense from understanding, and of form from matter. This is now plain. He separates the form from the matter of volition, and sets the one against the other. In the form is to be found morality, in the matter, immorality. In mere logical consistency is to be found goodness, duty, holiness. In all yielding to feelings and desires there is evil, impurity. It is the old Manichean dualism come back respectably clothed in the garments of philosophy.

§ 4. Kant's Examples.

But Kant's theory is, in truth, helpless to give the aid it seems to give. The examples he adduces are really more than they pretend to be. They profess to be determinations of the morality of certain acts by reference simply to the possibility of making the maxims of these acts universal. But the fact is, a certain settled order of things, a social order, is assumed as the basis of this possibility. The contradiction involved in the immoral action is not merely a logical contradiction, it is a contradiction between the maxim of the immoral action, and some principle essential to the existence of the social order which is presupposed. The real standard is, therefore, not the conception of law in itself, mere universality, but the presupposed system or social order. For instance, Kant shows that the maxim of the selfish man, who will not help others who are in distress, could be conceived to be a universal law of nature, but that it would be "impossible to *will* that such a principle should have the universal validity of a law of nature. For a will which resolved this, would contradict itself, inasmuch as many cases might occur in which one would have need of the love and sympathy of others, and

in which by such a law of nature, sprung from his own will, he would deprive himself of all hope of the aid he desires."[1] But why, it may be asked, is this so, except that, as society is actually constituted, no man can find himself in a position in which he is not more or less dependent upon the will of others? The contradiction is not in the maxim itself, nor in the will itself, but emerges in the shape of a conflict between the will and the actual social system of which the man is a member. This social system is the real standard which is referred to, in order to decide the question.

§ 5. The Conflict of Laws.

Again, Kant's theory provides no means by which to explain the conflict of laws. On the contrary, it accentuates this difficulty and makes it quite inexplicable. According to Kant, the maxim of each act, if the act is moral, must be capable of being made a universal law of nature. Each rule of conduct is in itself a separate, independent, universal law, which can by no means admit exception. What is to be said, then, when these universal laws contradict one another? "Treated as universal and without exception, even two such commands as, *e.g.* 'Thou shalt not steal,' and 'Thou shalt not kill,' must ultimately come into collision with each other; for, if all other interests are to be postponed to the maintenance of the rights of property, it is impossible that all other interests should also be postponed to the preservation of human life. To make either property or life an absolute end is to raise a particular into a universal, to treat a part as if it were the whole. But the true moral vindication of each particular interest cannot be found in elevating it into something universal and absolute, but only in determining

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* p. 41.

its place in relation to the others in a complete system of morality." [1]

§ 6. Inconsistency of Kant's Ethical Philosophy.

Apart from the fact, already pointed out, that the dualism of Kant's ethical system corresponds with the dualism of his speculative philosophy, it is not hard to understand how, in particular, he was led to adopt the view that the good will is purely formal. He held, with the Hedonists, that pleasure is the end sought in the gratification of all desires and inclinations. Hence he had either to adopt Hedonism of some sort, or to conclude that the gratification of desire is always immoral. He saw clearly that Hedonism can supply no basis for a moral theory. He had therefore to eviscerate the good will, to deprive it of all material content, and be satisfied with the mere form of volition. But in doing so, Kant not only removed morality from the actual experience of men, he made it impossible. The "absolutely good will," the will which contains "merely the form of volition generally," is an unreality. It was this unreality which drove Kant into inconsistency. And Kant's system is inconsistent. For, first, as we have seen, he had to admit the morality of gratifying one inclination, viz. Respect for the Law. Secondly, it was only by the implicit presupposition of a settled social order that he was able to apply his imperative to any particular case. And, thirdly, the third form into which Kant threw his practical imperative derives its whole plausibility from the fact that the reader takes it to be exactly what its author intended it should not be, that is, a determination of conduct by reference to the nature of the concrete individual and not by reference to an abstract universal. In the formula, "So act as to

[1] E. Caird, *Critical Philosophy of Kant*, vol. ii. bk. ii. chap. ii.

treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only," he introduces the conception of humanity. But this conception of humanity is a mere abstraction from particulars: and how can abstract humanity be an end to the concrete individual? Under cover of the words "humanity, whether in thine own person or that of any other," Kant passes from the abstract conception to the concrete particular self. The absolute worth of the former must be Kant's real doctrine, if there is to be any harmony in his ethical system. The absolute worth of the latter is the truth to which the mind of the reader assents. The same inconsistency emerges in the application of the third formula to particular duties. The end of which account is taken is the concrete man, not abstract humanity.

It is easy to see that this form of the Kantian theory is not very far from the theory of the end which we were led to adopt above; but it is not easy to see how Kant persuaded himself, even with all the saving clauses which he introduced into his argument, that the later form of his theory agrees with the earlier in which the test of moral action is mere logical self-consistency. As Kant developed the later form of his theory he advanced still further in the direction of a concrete ethic. "Morality," he says, "consists in the reference of all action to the legislation which alone can render a kingdom of ends possible."[1] But, if this is so, formal universality is no longer the standard. The standard is the kingdom of ends for which the legislation exists. And this kingdom of ends, no matter how Kant may assert the necessity of abstracting "from the personal differences of rational beings and likewise from all the content of their

[1] Kant, *op. cit.* p. 52.

private ends," must be regarded as a concrete social order made up of particular individual units; for the conception of the kingdom of ends arises, not out of the abstract idea of humanity as an end in itself, but out of the fact that each concrete person must regard himself individually as an end in himself. It is obvious that this conception is a very great advance upon Kant's first position. From the affirmation of mere formal consistency he has advanced to a position from which, in spite of himself, he views the concrete self treating itself as an absolute end, and from this he has advanced to a standpoint from which the self regards all other persons as absolute ends—a vast stride involving special difficulties—and from this, again, he has advanced to a standpoint from which he regards all these persons united in a great social order under common laws and with a common end in view. How are all these ends to be identified, as they must be, if they are to be absolute, or ends in themselves? How is the magnificent conception of a concrete moral universe to be had from the empty husk of abstract logical universality? [1]

§ 7. Kant's Chief Contribution to Ethical Science.

It is, however, the third formula, and the conceptions which cluster round it, which form Kant's most valuable contribution to ethical science. No one can read Professor Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* without feeling the greatness of the debt which recent ethical study owes to Kant. At the same time Professor Green seems to have been misled to some extent by Kant's influence.

The sentence which stands first in Kant's *Metaphysic of Morals*, and which expresses the basis of his theory,

[1] These criticisms of Kant's ethical system are mainly due to E. Caird, *op. cit.* vol. ii. bk. ii. chap. ii.; Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Essay iv.; Dewey, *op. cit.* pp. 78-95.

involves an ambiguity which seems to be fundamental to all that is doubtful or erroneous in formal ethics. "Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will." In one sense this statement is not only true, but expresses a truth which is basal to all sound ethical thinking. Goodness, as a moral quality, cannot be rightly attributed to any mere external event or consequence. Apart from the Will, the conscious volition of a Person, there is no such thing as moral goodness. An act may be spoken of as good, but only when referred to the conscious volition of the Agent. On the other hand, it is to be noted that the will which is thus spoken of as good is not a mere settled disposition of mind or intention apart from the concrete act. Such a disposition is not *will*, though frequently so called. Nor is the good will, will *minus* desire, for then it would not be *will* at all. Nor, again, is the good will mere character, except in that fullest sense of character in which it is the inner side of concrete activity. It is, in fact, impossible to draw any distinction, which is not a mere confusion, between the will in general and particular concrete acts of will or volition. The good will is, then, simply the good volition. It is only another name for the good act. It is the good act regarded from the standpoint of the self or agent, from the inner side.

When this truth has been fully realised it will be seen that a formal ethic is an impossibility. No concrete volition can be free from desire, or can find its characterisation in any mere form. The concrete act is the union of self and not-self, motive and consequent, form and matter. The good will, or good volition, is self determining itself in such a way as to attain its end. The good action is self determining

the not-self in such a way as to attain its end. But in determining self the agent determines the not-self. It is the same activity regarded from two different points of view. Kant is therefore right in saying that the only unconditional good is the good will, if he means by the good will the good volition or act. If he means anything else he is the victim of abstraction.

Professor Green seems to have been to some extent misled by the ambiguity which has just been pointed out. He passes from the conception of the good as the end in which the self is truly satisfied to the conception of the good as character or disposition of a certain quality. "The only true good," he tells his readers, "is to be good."[1] There can be no question but that these words, when properly understood, express the truth, and express it in a most important way. But it must be confessed that it is sometimes hard for Professor Green's readers to understand them properly. There can be no doubt but that the only true good is to be good in the sense of performing the good act. But it is not true that the only true good is a settled disposition or quality of character other than the activity itself. When the good is described as the "perfection of human character," or as "self-devotion" to "the perfecting of man," there is danger lest a subjective perfection be set up as the moral ideal.

It does not appear that Professor Green actually makes this mistake, but he seems to strain the language which expresses the subjective side of moral activity until he appears to make it. The general effect is an undue emphasis on the ascetic side of morality. The self-devoted will becomes a will which contemplates too much its own self-devotion and which stifles desire, not for the sake of doing the good

[1] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 262.

deed, but for the sake of maintaining its own self-devoted condition. Self, let it be remembered, attains its end in the doing of the act, not in the attainment of a subjective perfection. The true good is to *do* good. If, then, any one prefers to say virtue is itself the good, let it be noted that the only sense in which this can be said is that *virtuous action* is the good. Action is the true concrete. Of course it will be said that character finds its perfect expression in action, that it is impossible to separate character from activity. To this position no objection can be taken. The vice of such expressions as those used by Professor Green[1] is that they seem to make a separation of character from activity, and to elevate an abstraction into the position of the ultimate moral aim. If subjective perfection of character is made the moral ideal, then the good man is the man who does the good action, not for its own sake, but because he seeks to be perfect. The good action is not an end in itself. It is a means to personal perfection. Whence, self-regard, pride, the subversion of true morality. Whereas, the good man is, as a matter of fact, the man who does this particular act and that particular act, because the acts are good in themselves, because in them he attains his true end. The great question, then, for every one, the ordinary man as well as the ethical philosopher, is: What is the end? What is the objective counterpart of the realised self? Self finds its realisation in correspondence with the not-self, and not in the contemplation of its own subjective condition. Hence the most important part of Ethics is not, as Professor Green seems to have thought, the formation of an adequate ideal of Virtue, but the definition of the End, so far as such definition is possible.

[1] Habitually throughout bk. iii. ch. v.

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